



GUIDELINES

FOR WOMEN'S CAUCUSES



INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to thank Rachel Barr, a consultant with IPU's Gender Partnership Programme, for preparing and drafting these *Guidelines*, after conducting an exhaustive review of existing documentation and organizing numerous interviews with women parliamentarians.

These *Guidelines* were made possible through the generous contributions of several women parliamentarians, who made themselves available for interviews about their experiences with women's parliamentary caucuses. Their input shed light on the multiple aspects of establishing and managing such caucuses. It also enabled us to illustrate the *Guidelines* with concrete examples, reflecting the diverse political and cultural contexts in which these caucuses operate.

We also received invaluable contributions from three international experts on women's participation in politics: Kristin Haffert, Sonia Palmieri and Elizabeth Powley. They provided constructive advice and numerous drafting suggestions.

The content of these *Guidelines* has been examined and checked by parliamentarians and others engaged in the practical work of parliaments. We extend our thanks to the members of IPU's Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians, and in particular to its President, Nurhayati Ali Assegaf (Indonesia), as well as its Second Vice-President, Betty Amongi (Uganda), Sonia Escudero (Argentina) and Ulrika Karlsson (Sweden) for their comments. Our thanks also go to Susan Markham, of the National Democratic Institute (NDI), for her comments and suggestions, and to Kristin van der Leest, of the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODHIR). Detailed observations and drafting proposals were also contributed by Brigitte Filion, Zeina Hilal and Kareen Jabre, of IPU's Gender Partnership Programme.

The idea and basic outline of this publication came from Kareen Jabre, Manager of the IPU Gender Partnership Programme. Its preparation was coordinated by Programme Officer Brigitte Filion with indispensable support from Valeria Sistik, particularly for a meticulous rereading of the text, as well as from Catherine Todeschini-Blondelle.

Recognition is also due to Stara Ahmidouch, Bérénice Auffret-Pereira, Ward Tanner and Pascale Bouquet, for helping to translate and edit this publication, and to Michel Favre, for organizing its layout and graphic design.

Lastly, we extend our thanks to our financial partners, and in particular USAID, Irish Aid and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). Their unfailing support has enabled IPU, among other things, to advance the establishment of women's parliamentary caucuses in numerous countries around the world and to lend support for their operations and activities.

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	3
Foreword	7
Introduction	9
The 4 steps	10
Overview: Why set up a women's caucus?	12
STEP 1 Assessing the environment	17
1. Is now the right time to start a women's caucus?	17
2. Are women MPs able to work across party lines?	18
3. Will efforts to establish a women's caucus find support or resistance?	19
4. Are resources available to support the women's caucus?	20
STEP 2 Laying the foundations	23
1. Where to start?	23
2. How to establish the vision and objectives of a women's caucus?	24
3. What name?	25
4. How should the caucus relate to the Parliament?	26
STEP 3 Getting the women's caucus up and running	29
1. Who should be in charge?	29
2. Who can be a member of the caucus?	30
3. How should meetings function?	31
4. How will the caucus make its decisions?	32
5. What funds are necessary to sustain operations and how will those funds be raised?	32
6. Writing the rules – an example of structure	34
Sample Rules Document	35
STEP 4 The women's caucus in action	39
1. How to transform objectives into action?	39
2. What activities can a caucus perform?	40
3. How can a caucus organize its work?	43
4. Strategies for ensuring an effective caucus	43
5. The durability of women's parliamentary caucuses	44
6. Publicizing the work of a caucus	45
7. How to know if a caucus is successful	45
Conclusion: Celebrating the accomplishments of women's caucuses	46
Annex 1 Caucus Support	49
Annex 2 Strategic Plans	53
Selected bibliography	57

FOREWORD

Much is expected of women parliamentarians. Their arrival, whether in large or small numbers, receives considerable attention. Great expectations await their presence in parliament. The public at large, women's organizations and their male colleagues scrutinize their work to assess how it might change the current political dynamics and bring fresh perspectives. They are subjected to strong pressures and obliged, in a way their male colleagues may not be, to produce results. And their work can be especially difficult, particularly in an environment still dominated by the principles and worldview of men.

Yet, women parliamentarians have found creative ways to meet these challenges. They are carving out a space for themselves in parliament, coalescing around common positions and working in concert, both within and outside parliamentary chambers, to make their concerns heard, participate in decision-making processes and redefine political priorities. They are effectively leveraging their positions of influence to reshape political and legislative outcomes.

Confirmed by IPU studies on *Equality in Politics* and *Gender-Sensitive Parliaments*, the establishment of women's parliamentary caucuses is one of the mechanisms that have enabled women to strengthen their political impact.¹ Women's caucuses can also help to bring greater equality between men and women in the daily operations and work of parliament. Such caucuses have been particularly effective in changing legislation and policies from a gender perspective and raising awareness about gender equality.

The success of women's caucuses stems primarily from their capacity to rally the support of women parliamentarians around common objectives, rising above political divisions. Women's caucuses also receive strong backing from civil society organizations and engage men in support of their actions. But there is no single model for a successful women's parliamentary caucus. Quite the contrary: the diversity observed among such caucuses, in terms of structure, composition, functioning and areas of activity, has been a function of the specific needs and objectives pursued by women parliamentarians in various countries, as well as the specific political and cultural context in which they evolve.

The purpose of these *Guidelines* is to provide a practical tool for women seeking to create a women's parliamentary caucus, or improve an existing caucus. They are intended to guide such initiatives, raising a series of key questions and examining all the aspects that need to be considered in creating and managing an effective caucus. We hope women parliamentarians will rely on these guidelines as a source of advice, examples of good practice, and, above all, of the inspiration needed to make their parliamentary terms a stimulating contribution to gender equality everywhere.



Anders B. Johnsson
Secretary General
Inter-Parliamentary Union

1. IPU, *Equality in Politics: A Survey of Men and Women in Parliaments*, Geneva (2008) and *Gender-Sensitive Parliaments: A Global Study of Good Practices*, Geneva (2011).

INTRODUCTION

Women account for only about 20 per cent of the world's MPs.² In nearly every country they form a minority in parliament, an institution traditionally governed according to the principles and world-views of their predominantly male memberships.

Under these conditions, women MPs tend to coalesce and create spaces enabling them to make their voices heard, forge ties of mutual solidarity and contribute to the work of parliament. IPU has identified 81 parliamentary women's caucuses created over the last 20 years.² And the trend continues. More and more women parliamentarians are seeking information about these groups and related practical guidance – how to create a caucus, how to run it effectively and sustainably, and how to find information about existing caucuses.

The purpose of these *Guidelines for women's caucuses* is to answer such questions, equip women with the tools needed to create a caucus and outline a standardized, step-by-step process for doing so. These Guidelines can also help to improve the effectiveness of existing caucuses, focusing the attention of parliamentarians on the key issues and all of the various aspects entailed in creating and running a caucus and achieving its objectives. They are illustrated by examples observed in different parts of the world.

The Guidelines begin with an overview of why and for what purposes women may decide to establish a parliamentary caucus.

Four chapters, or stages, will then be devoted to each of the steps involved in creating and running a women's caucus. Each chapter includes a series of questions and a number of illustrative examples.

There are two annexes to these guidelines. The first lists organizations that may provide technical and financial support to women's caucuses. The second provides examples of strategic plans developed by different women's caucuses around the world.

These guidelines can also be used in conjunction with IPU's online database on women's caucuses (www.ipu.org/wmn-e/caucus), which lists existing groups and provides exhaustive comparative information on 81 women's caucuses around the world,⁴ their structure and composition, the issues they address and examples of their rules.

2. IPU, Women in national parliaments, percentage of women/world average: 21.4 %, as of 1 September 2013, www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm.
3. This information comes from IPU's online database on women's parliamentary caucuses: www.ipu.org/wmn-e/caucus. The data were gathered in several stages and by different means between 2011 and 2013, including a study and review of research by other organizations on women's parliamentary caucuses; questionnaires sent to IPU Member Parliaments, and interviews with parliamentarians.
4. There are 37 women's caucuses in Africa, 14 each in Europe and Asia and 12 in the Americas. There are four women's caucuses in the Arab world and none in the Pacific region.



THE 4 STEPS

1 Assessing the environment

This first chapter examines how to consider the objectives to be pursued in light of the political context before deciding to create a women's caucus. It looks at several questions:

- Is this the right time to create a women's caucus?
- Will women MPs be able to look beyond political divisions?
- Will efforts to establish a women's caucus be supported or opposed?
- Will the caucus have the resources it needs to operate?

4 The women's caucus in action

This fourth and last chapter is devoted to achievement of the caucus's objectives. It examines the:

- activities
- strategies to ensure the effectiveness of its action
- strategic planning
- communication and evaluation of its activities needed for a women's caucus to function effectively in pursuit of those objectives

INVOLVED IN CREATING AND RUNNING A WOMEN'S CAUCUS

2 Laying the foundations

This second stage is about making a caucus effective in light of its particular context. It relates in particular to:

- the procedure to be followed in setting up the caucus
- the mission and objectives of the caucus
- its name
- its status vis-à-vis the parliament

3 Getting the women's caucus up and running

This third stage is devoted to the decisions that need to be taken and the questions that need to be answered in launching a women's caucus, particularly with respect to its:

- structure
- management
- composition
- meetings
- decisions
- financing

This chapter is also intended to facilitate the drafting of caucus rules, providing an example to show how such rules can be structured.

OVERVIEW:

WHY SET UP A WOMEN'S CAUCUS?

Women's caucuses or parliamentary groups are mechanisms that have been created within the parliaments of many countries to strengthen cooperation among women engaged in political life. Such caucuses can bring women parliamentarians together across party lines in effective alliances around a common goal.⁵

Women's caucuses can serve several purposes, as illustrated below:

WOMEN'S CAUCUSES ESTABLISH CROSS-PARTY CO-OPERATION. They unite women parliamentarians from different political parties around issues they all can support, helping them rise above the tensions between parties to fight for women's causes or collaborate on other policy issues.

In Burundi, during the 2005-2010 legislature, tensions ran high between two women's parliamentary caucuses: one affiliated with the parliament and composed of all incumbent women MPs, and the other composed of both incumbent and former women MPs. Despite the tensions between them, fuelled by strong partisan divisions, the women in these caucuses were able to coalesce around common efforts to promote the rights of Burundian women. Their achievements have included the passage of an amendment to the country's electoral law to establish a 30 per cent quota for women in local elections as well as amendments to the Penal Code to punish various forms of sexual violence against women. Their shared success on a common platform, their motivation and goodwill have helped them to rise above their political affiliations.⁶

In Sudan, one of the biggest challenges faced by the Women's Parliamentarian Caucus, after 50 years of war in the country, has been uniting women from different parties and different regions. Over time, because of the importance and seriousness of their work on women's issues, caucus members have grown to feel more connected to one another, and better able to speak with one voice in support of certain issues. Their successes have included an amendment to the country's electoral law to guarantee a quota of 25 per cent women in all decision-making positions.⁷

5. *Women's Caucuses*, (Joint AGORA – iKNOW Politics Virtual Discussion, 9-20 May 2011), p.2.

6. Project in support of women parliamentarians in Burundi, Narrative report of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2009.

7. Woman parliamentarian from Sudan interviewed during the IPU Regional seminar on violence against women, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, December 2012.

WOMEN'S CAUCUSES DEFEND WOMEN'S LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES and increase their influence in parliament. This can have a demonstrable effect on the likelihood of women's issues being discussed in parliament, and ultimately articulated in legislation. These caucuses have enabled women parliamentarians to express their views and impact on the work of parliament.

In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the Women's Parliamentary Club supported the passage of a law establishing a 30 per cent quota for women in parliament. The law has made it easier for the parliament to pass other women's legislation, dealing with equality and women's access to healthcare.⁸ The Club has also supported a new chapter in the Law on Families, to protect victims of domestic violence, and helped to draft and pass the Law on Equal Opportunities.⁹

In Kenya, the Women Parliamentary Association (KEWOPA) helped pass the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting Act, adopted in 2011.¹⁰

In Iraq, the Women Parliamentary Caucus has supported the Illiteracy Elimination Bill.¹¹ According to 2010 data the average literacy rate among Iraqi women is 70.6 per cent, compared to 86 per cent among Iraqi men.¹² These national averages stand in stark contrast to the data gathered from rural areas, where at least 50 per cent of young women (between the ages of 15 and 24) are illiterate.¹³

In Estonia, Poland, Rwanda, and many other countries, the women's caucuses have focused on passing legislation to end violence against women.¹⁴

In Indonesia, the Caucus of Women Parliamentarians successfully advocated the inclusion of a 30 per cent quota for women candidates on party lists for the parliamentary elections.¹⁵

WOMEN'S CAUCUSES CAN ALSO WORK IN OTHER POLICY AREAS, not necessarily focused on women, analysing a broad range of issues from a gender perspective and addressing the needs of other marginalized groups, especially children:

In Namibia, the Women's Caucus gave its strong support for the creation of a Children's Parliament, a body composed of high school age students (50 per cent male, 50 per cent female) who meet to discuss children's, gender and other selected issues. The Children's Parliament issues proposals to the government for solutions to particular problems or action in particular situations, and some of its ideas have been voted on and approved by the country's Parliament.¹⁶

8. Woman parliamentarian from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, interviewed during the 125th Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly, Bern, Switzerland, October 2011.
9. www.sobranie.mk/en/?ItemID=CF32301070BA9E44AB8DA3FB6408976A
10. www.kewopa.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=79&Itemid=134
11. Woman parliamentarian from Iraq, interviewed during the 125th Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly, Bern, Switzerland, October 2011.
12. www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/iz.html
13. www.usip.org/files/Gender/SR_Lessons_from_Women's_Programmes_in_Afghanistan_and_Iraq.pdf
14. Responses from Estonia and Poland to "Questionnaire on Caucuses of Women Parliamentarians," IPU Survey, 2013, and in Pearson Elizabeth (ed. Elizabeth Powley), "Demonstrating Legislative Leadership: the Introduction of Rwanda's Gender-Based Violence Bill", Hunt Alternatives, Washington, D.C., 2008
15. Written comment provided by an Indonesian woman parliamentarian, September 2013.
16. Woman parliamentarian from Namibia, interviewed during the 125th Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly, Bern, Switzerland, October 2011.

In Ecuador, the Women's Parliamentary Caucus has contributed to such legislation as the Code of Planning and Public Finance and the Law on General Education.¹⁷

In Uganda, the Women Parliamentary Association carried out an analysis of the State budget and succeeded in convincing the government to increase its allocations to the health sector.¹⁸

In Mongolia, the Women's Caucus was successful in introducing and helping to pass legislation banning smoking, as well as initiating a law on citizen's health.¹⁹

WOMEN'S CAUCUSES HELP TO BUILD THE CAPACITY OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS, organizing and providing support and training to make them better members. According to research conducted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union,²⁰ the main challenge facing newly-elected women find is coming to grips with how male-dominated the system is and figuring out the parliament's written and unwritten rules and procedures. Women's caucuses can help by educating their members in such areas and teaching women the ropes of parliament, to make them better, more confident leaders.

In the Lao People's Democratic Republic, where many women enter parliament without really knowing how the institution functions, the Women Parliamentarians Caucus trains its new members about the rules and procedures in place, so that they can be effective and successful parliamentarians.²¹

In Kenya, the Women Parliamentary Association, as reported by one of its members, has played the role of encouraging women parliamentarians to run for re-election.²² Support provided in this connection includes leadership training for caucus members, professional skills training for members' personal assistants, and access to research and policy briefs on important issues before Parliament.²³

In Morocco, the Forum of Women Parliamentarians improves the leadership and parliamentary skills of its members by offering conflict resolution workshops.²⁴

In Burundi, the Association of Women Parliamentarians holds special training sessions on leadership, communication and advocacy.²⁵

In Ethiopia, the Caucus of Women Parliamentarians organizes events enabling members to practice their debating skills in a non-threatening environment.²⁶

17. derechosmujeres.ec/web/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=45&Itemid=171&lang=es
18. Written information submitted by a woman MP from Uganda, October 2013.
19. Response from Mongolia to "Questionnaire on Caucuses of Women Parliamentarians," IPU Survey, 2013.
20. Equality in Politics: A survey of women and men in parliament (2008).
21. Woman parliamentarian from Lao People's Democratic Republic, interviewed during the 125th Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly, Bern, Switzerland, October 2011.
22. Woman parliamentarian from Kenya.
23. www.kewopa.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=79&Itemid=134; www.gendergovernancekenya.org/kewopa%20260111reviewedfinal.pdf
24. www.iknowpolitics.org/files/NDI-Womens%20Caucus%20Fact%20Sheet_0.pdf
25. IPU and Parliament of Burundi, Rapport de l'atelier de renforcement des capacités des femmes parlementaires sur le leadership, communication et plaidoyer, Bujumbura, 10-12 December 2012.
26. Woman parliamentarian from Ethiopia, interviewed during the 125th Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly, Bern, Switzerland, October 2011.

In Rwanda, the Forum of Women Parliamentarians trains its male and female members in gender-related issues, gender mainstreaming and gender-responsive budgeting.²⁷

In Lesotho, the Parliamentarian Women's Caucus has identified a "put head down syndrome" that is inhibiting women from actively participating and defending their beliefs in parliament, allowing men parliamentarians to tell them how to vote. The caucus provides leadership training programmes to empower women, make them confident in their abilities and beliefs and encourage them to stand up to their male counterparts and be heard.²⁸

WOMEN'S CAUCUSES PROMOTE GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN THE WORK AND FUNCTIONING OF PARLIAMENT, generating very practical benefits for women parliamentarians themselves and improving the institution's sensitivity to gender. The IPU global survey on *Gender-sensitive Parliaments*²⁹ found that women's caucuses can be as effective as gender equality committees in promoting gender equality in a parliament's work practices and outputs. They can serve, for instance, as "watchdogs" or focal points in parliament to ensure that a gender perspective is included in all debates and decisions.

In Kenya, the Women Parliamentary Association mainstreamed gender into the 2008 and 2012 Standing Orders of Parliament and increased the representation of women MPs in the leadership of parliamentary committees. The caucus also successfully developed a gender-responsive budgeting guidebook for parliament.³⁰

In Uganda, the Women Parliamentary Association had the Standing Orders amended such that 40 per cent of leadership posts on parliamentary committees are reserved for women.³¹

In South Africa, the Multi Party Women's Caucuses obtained the establishment of a day care centre in parliament, enabling women and men MPs and parliamentary staff to perform their duties without having to worry about childcare while at work.³²

27. IPU and Parliament of Rwanda, Report of the capacity building workshop for FFRP members in "Gender, Gender mainstreaming and Gender budgeting, Huye, 20-21 April 2012.

28. A woman parliamentarian from Lesotho.

29. IPU, Gender-sensitive Parliaments: A Global Review of Good Practice, 2011, www.ipu.org/english/surveys.htm#gsp11, www.kewopa.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=79&Itemid=134

30. www.gendergovernancekenya.org/kewopa%2026011reviewedfinal.pdf

31. Written information submitted by a woman MP from Uganda, October 2013.

32. www.iknowpolitics.org/files/NDI-Womens%20Caucus%20Fact%20Sheet_0.pdf

CAUCUS? COMMITTEE? OR BOTH?

Parliaments use a number of mechanisms to address gender equality issues and facilitate women's political solidarity.

Some parliaments opt to have a parliamentary committee focused on women's or gender equality issues. Committees are formal bodies of parliament that draft and review legislation, hold hearings and conduct other official parliamentary functions. Committees are more closely regulated by parliamentary rules than caucuses but also have more legislative power.

Caucuses are more informal groups that lobby for legislation, conduct outreach activities, gain visibility for women's issues and accomplish other stated goals. Unlike committees these groups do not usually have formal legislative responsibilities, but they can be more persuasive, mainly through advocacy, which is frequently a priority among their informal activities.

Caucuses can be established even where parliaments have "opted" to form a committee for gender issues. The two are not mutually exclusive.³³ In addition, some women's parliamentary caucuses have established strategic cooperation with parliamentary committees and other organs responsible for gender issues and gender equality, in order to exert greater influence on the legislative process in parliament.

In Ecuador, women parliamentarians have opted to establish a caucus preferring to mainstream gender and women's issues in the work of all committees rather than confine them to a single specialized committee.³⁴

In Argentina, the Women's Caucus has become a full-fledged committee, operating with the same powers and rules as any other.³⁵

In Timor-Leste, a committee on gender issues works together with a women's caucus to raise awareness about domestic violence, organizing contests with prizes for children and young adults (asked to draw pictures or write a paragraph about why domestic violence is bad), women (asked to write poems about gender-based violence) and teachers (asked to submit essays on how to teach people about the problem of domestic violence).³⁶

33. IPU, Gender-sensitive Parliaments, p. 40-42.

34. derechosmujeres.ec/web/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=45&Itemid=171&lang=es

35. Written comment provided by an Argentine woman parliamentarian, October 2013.

36. IPU, Gender-sensitive Parliaments, p. 45.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, a good review of the differences between parliamentary committees and parliamentary caucuses is provided by Gonzalez and Sample, "One Size Does Not Fit All: Lessons Learned from Legislative Gender Commissions and Caucuses," published in 2010 by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) and the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI).



STEP 1

ASSESSING THE ENVIRONMENT

Evaluating the goals to be pursued vis-à-vis the political context

This chapter looks at the steps that need to be taken and the questions that need to be answered before deciding to create a women's parliamentary caucus, in terms of timing, consultative process and challenges that may arise.

1. IS NOW THE RIGHT TIME TO START A WOMEN'S CAUCUS?

Women's caucuses prosper in environments that facilitate collaboration among women. Accordingly, in determining whether the time is right to start a women's caucus, consideration should be given to the overall political environment, in the country and within parliament, and to the history of women in parliament.

QUESTIONS/ACTIONS

The following questions and actions could be considered:

- Have women MPs expressed a genuine interest in forming a caucus?
- Is women's representation in parliament new or firmly established?
- Has there been a women's caucus or similar group in parliament before?
 - If so, why was it abolished?
 - Have the issues leading to its abolition since been resolved?
- Will other members and the parliamentary leadership be receptive to such a caucus?
- Are there any other caucuses in parliament?
- Is there scope for cross-party collaboration in parliament?
- Is there a strong women's movement, or are there women's civil society groups prepared to work in partnership with a women's parliamentary caucus?

2. ARE WOMEN MPS ABLE TO WORK ACROSS PARTY LINES?

If parties and positions tend to be polarized or to span the political spectrum it may be challenging to facilitate cooperation among women MPs in different parties. Political party discipline – when it prevents members from leaving partisan politics aside and working together on the issues advocated – can impede the creation or the effectiveness of a caucus.

It is important to assess the prospects for women uniting and building consensus on specific issues. Cross-party initiatives that all women can support can prevent gridlock. Some issues, such as violence against women, are less partisan than others. In a March 2011 article by the *Express Tribune*, a subsidiary of the *International Herald Tribune*, Justice Nasira Iqbal of Pakistan explained that, "Twenty per cent women parliamentarians can make a big difference if they take charge instead of toeing their party lines."³⁷ This is exactly the attitude needed when dealing with women's caucuses.

QUESTIONS/ACTIONS

- How strong is party discipline? How open are political parties to cross-party cooperation?
- What themes or issues are likely to unite women?



The Burundi Women Parliamentary Association (AFEPABU), Workshop on capacity building for women parliamentarians, Burundi, 2013.

37. tribune.com.pk/story/134210/gender-politics-and-media-women-parliamentarians-should-be-above-party-line/?print=true.

In Malawi, the Women Caucus polls its members on the issues they consider most important in order to determine, and ensure unity behind, the caucus's positions on those issues.³⁸

In Australia, the Federal Parliament has never had a cross-party women's caucus. For the purposes of meeting with women from other political parties, Australian women MPs, according to research conducted in the 1990s, prefer informal get-togethers, such as morning teas or lunches, rather than a formalized caucus. This was attributed to the fundamentally opposing views of women from different parties.³⁹

3. WILL EFFORTS TO ESTABLISH A WOMEN'S CAUCUS FIND SUPPORT OR RESISTANCE?

Gaining support from male members of parliament as well as other actors can often be crucial. Consideration should be given to conducting a consultative process before forming a caucus, in particular with potential supporters, to gauge the level of support and assistance the group might receive from others.

QUESTIONS/ACTIONS

- It is essential to identify potential allies as well as adversaries before attempting to form a women's caucus.
- It is useful to consult with women in parliament, party leadership and members of civil society.
 - *Women parliamentarians*: it is important to make sure that enough women are interested in the initiative and that there is sufficient bi- or multi-partisan support among them to make starting a women's caucus worthwhile. The caucus's cross-party character should be categorically clear.
 - *Party and parliamentary leadership*: to ensure functional effectiveness and sustainability, even in the face of political change, it is imperative to confirm the existence of support for the caucus among political party leaders. It is also useful to know whether, and in what form, the caucus will be recognized by the parliament.
 - *Civil society*: the support of women's organizations and other civil society groups can be important throughout the life of a caucus, especially when implementing research projects and awareness-raising and advocacy activities.
- In bicameral parliaments, it is important to check whether the other chamber already has a women's caucus. If it does, consideration should be given to forming a single, bicameral caucus, with members from both chambers.
- It can be helpful to liaise with women parliamentarians or civil society members from other countries who have had experience in setting up or participating in a women's caucus. The ability to learn from such experience in addressing future challenges epitomizes the value-added that caucuses can provide.

38. www.iknowpolitics.org/files/NDI-Womens%20Caucus%20Fact%20Sheet_0.pdf.

39. IPU, *Gender-sensitive Parliaments*, p. 53.



Cambodian Women Parliamentarians' Leadership Retreat, Cambodia, 2009.

© IPU/UNDP

4. ARE RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO SUPPORT THE WOMEN'S CAUCUS?

One of the challenges many women parliamentarians face is a lack of resources – financial, logistical and human – and women's caucuses can find it hard to function with small budgets and overextended members. A lack of institutional support from parliament for a caucus can make it difficult for a caucus to conduct its activities (if, for instance, it cannot get a meeting room for its members in the parliamentary precincts). Caucuses may have small staffs of one or two people, or no permanent staff at all. It can also be difficult for a caucus to function without funding for planned programmes, or sufficient human resources to get the work done.

In Lesotho, the Parliamentary Women's Caucus has no permanent staff, obliging it to delegate duties to the regular office staff of individual parliamentarians.⁴⁰

QUESTIONS/ACTIONS

- It is important to assess what support might be forthcoming from within and outside of parliament.
- The rules of parliament should be consulted to determine whether caucus governance provisions have already been adopted.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Many international organizations provide support to women MPs interested in setting up a caucus. See Annex 1 for general information about such organizations, the support they provide and relevant contact information.

40. Woman parliamentarian from Lesotho, interviewed during the 125th Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly, Bern, Switzerland, October 2011.

NOTES

A large rectangular area with a light purple background and horizontal dotted lines, intended for taking notes. The area is bounded by a dark purple triangle on the top left corner containing the word 'NOTES'.

NOTES

A large rectangular area with a light purple background, containing horizontal dotted lines for writing notes.



STEP 2

LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

Making a women's caucus work effectively by considering the big picture

This chapter focuses on the bigger picture. If a caucus were to be established, what should it do? What should it aim for? How should it relate to the parliament, and how should it present itself to the outside world?

1. WHERE TO START?

It is important to conduct a clear, transparent and inclusive process for the establishment of a women's caucus, to start off on the right foot and prevent perceptions of partisanship or bias from taking root even before the caucus is formed. The decision process should involve all women interested in joining, to ensure their "buy-in" and sense of belonging to the caucus.

One possibility is to establish a preparatory committee of parliamentarians, tasked with proposing different options for the creation of the caucus. If the parliament is divided among multiple parties, this preparatory committee should be composed of women parliamentarians from each.

QUESTIONS/ACTIONS

- Identify and adopt a clear process for developing the caucus and delineate responsibilities clearly.

2. HOW TO ESTABLISH THE VISION AND OBJECTIVES OF A WOMEN'S CAUCUS?

The vision and objectives of the caucus should be identified as early as possible, to facilitate later process-related decisions. The definition of common objectives will also enable the caucus to rise above political divisions and give it strategic direction

In Sierra Leone, for instance, the following vision has been adopted: "A united women parliamentarians' caucus, working together irrespective of political party affiliation, to ensure equality for all, especially women, children and the vulnerable, by advocating, enacting and monitoring gender- and child-sensitive laws and budgets in Sierra Leone".⁴¹

In Grenada, the vision of the Women's Parliamentary Caucus is to "provide an opportunity for women to exchange and ensure the cross-fertilization of ideas, to form collective platforms on particular policies and actions, and to support one another on issues and areas of common concern".⁴²

As for objectives, some examples can be found below:

- To promote solidarity among women in general and among women parliamentarians in particular;
- To influence policy and legislation from a gender perspective;
- To raise awareness of gender equality issues in parliament;
- To enhance the capacity of women parliamentarians as effective legislators and representatives;
- To ensure that gender equality policy and legislation is effectively implemented;
- To lobby for support from non-governmental and inter-governmental organisations.

QUESTIONS/ACTIONS

- Hold a debate or consultation on the vision and objectives of the caucus.
- Research examples from similar bodies.



First meeting of the Network of South Asian Women Parliamentarians, Sri Lanka, 2013.

© The Asia Foundation/Hafizur Rahman Dipu

41. Constitution of the Sierra Leone Female Parliamentarians' Caucus.

42. Rules of the Grenada Women's Parliamentary Caucus, Preamble.



© IPU/Julie Ballington

Pacific Regional Workshop on Advancing Women's Representation in Parliament, Cook Islands, April 2006.

3. WHAT NAME?

The name given to a caucus is extremely important, as it can indicate the body's purpose and nature. It could be expected that a "women's caucus" would be composed of women MPs and would focus more on women's rights issues than would a "gender equality caucus". In either case the name would naturally be determined, at least in part, by the objectives of the caucus.

In deciding how the group will be labelled – as an association, group, caucus, network, union, forum, club, or something else – thought should be given to how formal the group will be, as some labels indicate greater formality than others. The political and cultural connotations of a given label should also be considered.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the following name was adopted: Gender Parliamentary Group.⁴³

In Mali: Network of Women Parliamentarians.⁴⁴

In the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: Women's Parliamentary Club.⁴⁵

In the United Kingdom: Parliamentary Group for Women in Parliament.⁴⁶

In Israel: the Lobby for Female Knesset Members.⁴⁷

QUESTIONS/ACTIONS

- Discuss the impact of different names and labels taking into account the national political and cultural context.

43. Woman parliamentarian from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, interviewed during the 125th Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly, Bern, Switzerland, October 2011.

44. Woman parliamentarian from Mali, interviewed during the 125th Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly, Bern, Switzerland, October 2011.

45. Woman parliamentarian from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

46. Response from the United Kingdom, to "Questionnaire on Caucuses of Women Parliamentarians," IPU Survey, 2013.

47. Response from Israel to "Questionnaire on Caucuses of Women Parliamentarians," IPU Survey, 2013.

4. HOW SHOULD THE CAUCUS RELATE TO THE PARLIAMENT?

Another aspect to be decided is what kind of relationship the caucus will have with the parliament.

→ **Formal caucuses**, by definition, have a formal relationship with the parliament: they may have been formed by a parliamentary resolution and their specific roles and responsibilities may have been outlined in the parliament's internal rules. Such caucuses are more closely tied than informal caucuses to the parliament's internal functioning. Having been legitimized by the institution, such groups enjoy greater visibility in parliament and greater attention when they voice their opinions. Positioned within a parliament's internal structure, formal caucuses can bring more knowledge and exert greater influence than informal caucuses in the policy-making and legislative arenas. Formal caucuses may also be eligible to request staff, office space, meeting rooms, and funding from the parliament, but subject to compliance with the parliament's standing rules (e.g., on fundraising and membership).

In Viet Nam and the Lao People's Democratic Republic, women's parliamentary groups were established formally by resolutions of their respective national assemblies that spell out their membership and leadership structures. Both groups meet during sessions of their respective parliaments, are supported by parliamentary staff (although the caucus is an additional duty for them), and receive financial support from parliament.⁴⁸

→ **Informal caucuses**, again by definition, are not formal structures of parliament. Nor are they situated within the structure of a parliament. While composed of MPs they operate outside the legislative body. Informal caucuses may be required to abide by national regulations that apply to associations or other groups. They may appear to enjoy more freedom than formal caucuses from parliamentary rules, in terms of fundraising and membership, but may also be less visible within parliament.

In Mongolia, the United States of America and Zambia, the women's caucuses are informal and are not part of the formal structures of the parliament.⁴⁹

QUESTIONS/ACTIONS

In deciding on the various options it is important to:

- ↘ check whether the parliament's internal rules (or standing orders) provide for the establishment of formal caucuses in parliament;
- ↘ review the national laws applying to extra-parliamentary organizations;
- ↘ determine in either case whether there are restrictions on funding or membership of the caucus; and
- ↘ verify, based on the more or less formal nature of its place within parliament, whether the caucus will be automatically renewed with each new legislature or will need to be re-established at regular intervals – after each legislative election, for instance.

48. IPU, *Gender-sensitive Parliaments*, p. 48.

49. Responses from Mongolia, the United States of America and Zambia to "Questionnaire on Caucuses of Women Parliamentarians," IPU Survey, 2013.

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STEP 3

GETTING THE WOMEN'S CAUCUS UP AND RUNNING

Deciding how the caucus should function and writing the rules

The following chapter details the decisions that must be taken and the questions that must be answered to launch a caucus and keep it running (in particular with respect to its structure, leadership, membership and external relations). This chapter aims to facilitate the drafting of the caucus's rules and its operational functioning.

1. WHO SHOULD BE IN CHARGE?

In defining the leadership of a caucus it may be useful to develop rules designed to diffuse potential conflicts and encourage cooperation among political parties.

QUESTIONS/ACTIONS

There are several questions to consider:

- Will the leadership consist of a president and a vice-president or a leadership council?
- How large will the leadership team be compared to the size of the caucus?
- How will the leadership be chosen?
- What terms of service or time limits apply to leadership positions?
- Will the caucus be able to count on a secretariat or permanent staff, or are responsibilities divided among the leadership, other parliamentarians or their staffs?

In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the Women's Parliamentary Club is run by its executive council. The issue of partisanship is addressed by giving one seat on the executive council to each party and rotating its presidency among the different parties.⁵⁰

50. Woman parliamentarian from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

In Uruguay, every member of the Women's Caucus is considered equal. No one has a higher position than anyone else, and decisions are taken by consensus.⁵¹

In Pakistan, the highest ranking woman member of parliament is appointed leader of the Women Parliamentarian Caucus.⁵²

In Nepal, the president of the Women's Caucus is appointed from one party and the vice president from another.⁵³

In Thailand, the presidency switches between a senator and a representative, because the Women Parliamentarian Caucus serves a bicameral legislature.⁵⁴

2. WHO CAN BE A MEMBER OF THE CAUCUS?

Deciding who is eligible for membership of a caucus is another important question to be resolved.

In the case of bicameral parliaments, some caucuses include members of both chambers; others limit membership to only one chamber. In some cases, all women MPs are automatically members of the caucus. In others, they have to express their interest and sign up to be a member. Some caucuses provide for full membership, associate membership, honorary membership, etc. Others allow men or former women members to participate, often as associate members. Male champions of gender equality can heighten the profile and momentum of a caucus, and gender equality can be pursued most effectively if addressed by both men and women. Former women MPs can draw from their own experience in parliament to offer advice and assistance. Such first-hand advice can be very helpful, especially to new members. Sometimes, however, expanding a caucus's membership can complicate and politicize its decision processes.

QUESTIONS/ACTIONS

The following questions focus on the fundamentals to be taking into consideration when deciding about caucus membership.

- What are the criteria for membership? Are all women MPs de facto members or do they need to apply for membership?
- Are there different types of membership with different rights, obligations, responsibilities and prerogatives?
- Does any action constitute grounds for expelling a caucus member, and if so, who makes that decision? Can such members be allowed back into the caucus at some later time?

In Sierra Leone, members of the Female Parliamentarians' Caucus can nominate male parliamentarians for associate membership of the caucus.⁵⁵

In Namibia, within the country's bicameral parliament, a women's caucus has been established for members of the National Council (upper house) only. Elected to represent regions of the country, these members established their caucus in order to advance women's issues in each of their respective regions.⁵⁶

In Grenada, all present and former women parliamentarians can be regular members of the Women's Parliamentary Caucus.⁵⁷

51. Woman parliamentarian from Uruguay, interviewed during the 125th Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly, Bern, Switzerland, October 2011.

52. An Introduction to Women's Parliamentary Caucus: Parliament of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan (Women's Parliamentary Caucus, 2009).

53. www.iknowpolitics.org/files/NDI-Womens%20Caucus%20Fact%20Sheet_0.pdf

54. Women parliamentarian, Thailand, interviewed during the 125th Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly, Bern, Switzerland, October 2011.

55. Constitution of the Sierra Leone Female Parliamentarians' Caucus (SLEFPAC), art.5

56. Woman parliamentarian from Namibia.

57. Rules of the Grenada Women's Parliamentary Caucus (GWPC), art.2



© IPU/UNDP

Cambodian Women Parliamentarians' Leadership Retreat, Cambodia, 2009.

3. HOW SHOULD MEETINGS FUNCTION?

Women's caucuses in some countries hold meetings every month or in conjunction with legislative sessions. Caucuses in other countries meet only as necessary, and particularly when important legislation is on the floor. The frequency of a caucus's meetings should be informed by its objectives, the political timeline and the purpose of each meeting, to ensure worthwhile and well organized meetings. If members begin to find the meetings a waste of time – because they are held too often, are disorganized and unproductive, or unfocused – then people will stop coming, eroding the caucus's effectiveness.

QUESTIONS/ACTIONS

- For what purpose does the caucus meet?
- What items are on the agenda/work plan over the next 6-12 months?
- Where and when should the meetings take place?
- Should the entire caucus meet in plenary, or assign specific issues to subgroups, meeting more often than the plenary?
- Is a quorum necessary for a meeting to take place?
- How are meetings managed?
- Should a secretary prepare an agenda for the meeting? Should it be circulated to members before the meeting? How can an item be added to the agenda?

4. HOW WILL THE CAUCUS MAKE ITS DECISIONS?

The issue here is whether the caucus will make its decisions by formal voting or by consensus. If a voting system is chosen, what percentage of votes is required: a simple majority (50%+1) or some other percentage (e.g., two-thirds)?

In Uruguay, the Women's Caucus decides on its work plan by consensus and meets in plenary sessions, so as to represent the collective interests of the entire cross-party group.⁵⁸ The caucus has no leadership structure of its own.⁵⁹

In Zimbabwe, the Women's Parliamentary Caucus makes decisions by consensus, failing which it votes by secret ballot.⁶⁰

QUESTIONS/ACTIONS

- The decision process to be adopted should be considered in light of the caucus's expected political party breakdown. For instance, if a simple majority voting system is in place, and if over half of the caucus's members are from one party, those members could potentially make partisan decisions, with no need of support from members of other parties. In that case, to respect the spirit of cross-partisanship a two-thirds majority or a consensus based system may be preferable.

5. WHAT FUNDS ARE NECESSARY TO SUSTAIN OPERATIONS AND HOW WILL THOSE FUNDS BE RAISED?

Funds are essential for most women's caucus activities, including outreach programmes, educational events and official visits. It is essential for a caucus to be clear about where its funding will come from.

In the case of formal caucuses, it should be determined in particular whether their basic operational budgets will be funded by parliament. If the caucus applies for external funding it is imperative to comply with national as well as parliamentary finance rules (every country has specific rules about funding from different types of organizations).

QUESTIONS/ACTIONS

- In countries where caucuses are funded by parliament, are the funds allotted equally among all existing groups/caucuses/organizations, or must a caucus submit proposals for the money it needs?
- Are organs of the parliament permitted to fundraise and receive funding from outside sources?
- What are the rules within parliament related to transparency and fundraising?
- Are there specific criteria as to the organizations that can provide money to parliamentary bodies (for instance, do they have to be apolitical?)?

58. Woman parliamentarian from Uruguay.

59. Johnson, Niki. "The role of cross-party parliamentary women's benches in promoting women's substantive representation: the case of the Uruguayan Bancada Bicameral Femenina." Prepared for the European Conference on Politics and Gender, Universitat Pompeu Fabre, Barcelona, March 21-23, 2013. www.ecpg-barcelona.com/sites/default/files/ECPG2013_NJohnson_BancadaBicameralFemenina-Uruguay.pdf

60. www.parlizim.gov.zw/CMS/Uploads/Womens_Caucus.pdf

Membership fees are one effective way of raising money for a caucus. If a caucus is interested in charging dues for membership, it should check the parliamentary rules to see if that is possible.

QUESTIONS/ACTIONS

- Will a membership fee gain general acceptance or will it restrict participation?
- Are there different fees associated with different levels of membership?
- Will the fees provide the caucus with enough funds to function properly?
- What happens if a member doesn't pay his or her fees?

In Pakistan, the budget of the Women Parliamentarian Caucus comes from voluntary fees paid by each member, as stipulated in its rules.⁶¹

In Uganda, the Women Parliamentary Association uses membership fees to raise money for caucus activities.⁶² To continue functioning and to support its programmes the caucus is also obliged to submit funding proposals to donors.⁶³

Most women's caucuses around the world need to look for alternative sources of funding or support. Sometimes other areas of the government will provide it, but many caucuses get money and support from non-governmental and inter-governmental organizations. Funding proposals are commonly submitted to such organizations and the funds are allotted according to the kinds of initiatives they are looking to support.

In Rwanda, IPU provided funding for capacity-building and strategic planning activities for the Forum of Women Parliamentarians.⁶⁴

In Burundi, IPU provided funding to be used for renting and furnishing office space and paying the salary of a coordinator of the Association of Women Parliamentarians.⁶⁵ IPU also finances activities conducted by this caucus.

In Ethiopia, the Caucus of Women Parliamentarians submits funding proposals to various organizations and countries. It has received donations in particular from the Spanish embassy and government.⁶⁶

In Iraq, the Women Parliamentary Caucus receives funding from non-governmental and inter-governmental organizations, including the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women).⁶⁷

In Mali, NDI has funded some of the activities of the Network of Women Parliamentarians.⁶⁸

In Namibia, the Ministry of Finance distributes equal amounts of funding to every caucus in parliament; the caucuses have no say in the matter.⁶⁹

In Togo, the Women's Caucus receives IPU support for activities to end violence against women,⁷⁰ as well as funding from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and various non-governmental organizations.⁷¹

In Uruguay, the Women's Caucus obtains funds domestically, from its constituent political parties.⁷²

61. IPU, Gender-sensitive Parliaments, p. 48.

62. Woman parliamentarian from Uganda, interviewed during the 125th Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly, Bern, Switzerland, October 2011.

63. Woman parliamentarian from Uganda.

64. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between IPU and the Parliament of Rwanda was concluded on providing assistance to the women's caucus. The MoU provides for activities funded by IPU and modalities for their implementation.

65. An agreement on IPU's financial contribution to the women's caucus was concluded. The agreement provides for funding modalities and the duties and obligations of each party.

66. Woman parliamentarian from Ethiopia.

67. Woman parliamentarian from Iraq.

68. Woman parliamentarian from Mali.

69. Woman parliamentarian from Namibia.

70. IPU and Parliament of Togo. Rapport de l'atelier de plaidoyer du Caucus des femmes parlementaires togolaises visant l'adoption de la proposition de loi portant sur les violences faites aux femmes et aux filles, Lomé, 12-14 February 2013.

71. Woman parliamentarian from Togo, interviewed during the 125th Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly, Bern, Switzerland, October 2011.

72. Woman parliamentarian from Uruguay.



© Parliament of Côte d'Ivoire

Information and training seminar for women parliamentarians on women's rights and gender equality, Côte d'Ivoire, 2013.

6. WRITING THE RULES – AN EXAMPLE OF STRUCTURE

Once the operational decisions described above have been made it is important to "codify" them in the caucus's standing rules. An example of how to structure these rules follows.

In order to write an effective rules document it is necessary to know what the broad and overall goals of the caucus are and what it hopes to help the parliament accomplish. This vision could be included in the introduction to the rules document.

Here are two examples:

In Zimbabwe, the preamble to the charter of the Women's Parliamentary Caucus is as follows: "We the Women Parliamentarians of Zimbabwe, Cognisant of the historical, cultural and other prejudices hindering our full participation in political decision-making and other social responsibilities, do hereby give to ourselves this Constitution which creates the Zimbabwean Women's Parliamentary Caucus. The vision of the Caucus shall be to achieve at least parity by the year 2015 and sustainably full participation in all decision-making organs of Parliament".⁷³

In Pakistan, the preamble to the Women Parliamentarian Caucus Rules, 2008, says the following: "In recognition of the contributions to the cause of Pakistani women for political and social empowerment, the Women Parliamentarian Caucus is to be established as a tribute to the pioneer women of Pakistan, namely Ms. Fatima Jinnah, Begum Rana Liaqat Ali Khan, Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto and all women's rights activists".⁷⁴

Following the introduction, the rules document should include paragraphs stating its name and a section providing definitions and explanations of the terms and abbreviations used in the document (e.g., "Assembly" to refer to the National Assembly of country X, or "caucus" to mean the Women's Parliamentarian Caucus of country X), as well as paragraphs relating to the nature, compositions and functioning of the caucus.

The rules document should end with a section describing the process for amending the rules, covering:

- how amendments should be made;
- the process for proposing amendments; and
- the process for voting on amendments.

The inclusion of a section on amendments is essential to a caucus's long-term survival, enabling it to adapt to changing needs.

73. www.parlzim.gov.zw/CMS/Uploads/Womens_Caucus.pdf

74. www.wpcp.org.pk/wpcp/ByLaws.aspx

SAMPLE RULES DOCUMENT

Provided below is a rules document template based on the questions and guidelines covered in "Step 3: Getting the caucus up and running".

Title of the Rules Document

Preamble/Introduction

Paragraph stating the rationale for and mission of the caucus.

Article 1: Name of the Caucus

The name of the caucus is...

Article 2: Definitions/Abbreviations

For the purposes of this document, "X" refers to caucus XYZ.

Article 3: Objectives

The objectives of the caucus are...

Article 4: Membership

Membership of the caucus is open to...

Article 5: Structure

The caucus structure shall include the following elements:

Article 5(1): Element #1 (ex. plenary assembly for general meetings).

Article 5(1a): The function of Element #1 is....

Article 5(1b): Element #1 is responsible for...

Article 5(2): Element #2 (ex: committees dealing with specific issues)

Article 5(2a): The function of Element #2 is....

Article 5(2b): Element #2 is responsible for...

.../...

Article 6: Leadership

The caucus leadership shall be composed as follows:

Article 6(1): Position #1

Explain the duties of the person in this position.

Article 6(2): Position #2

Explain the duties of the person in this position.

Article 6(3): Position #3

Explain the duties of the person in this position.

Article 6(4): Selection Procedure

The procedure for filling leadership positions (ex: secret ballot, consensus).

Article 7: Meetings

Article 7(1): Caucus meetings shall be held every X days/months.

Article 7(2): Decisions shall be made in the caucus by... (ex: secret ballot, consensus).

Article 7(3): The quorum for caucus meetings is X per cent of its membership.

Article 8: Functions of the caucus

The caucus shall perform the following functions...

Article 8(1): Function #1 (ex: advocacy).

Article 8(2): Function #2 (ex: capacity building for women parliamentarians).

Article 8(3): Function #3 (ex: educational events in partnership with male parliamentarians and civil society organizations).

Article 9: Funding

The sources of caucus funding shall be as follows:

Article 10: Amendments

The procedure for amending this rules document shall be as follows:

Other relevant sections may be added to the rules document as necessary.

In Pakistan, the 2008 Rules of the Women Parliamentarian Caucus contain a section on auditing the caucus.⁷⁵

In Grenada, the Rules of the Women's Parliamentary Caucus include a provision requiring an annual subscription fee of \$50 for members to participate.⁷⁶

In Poland, the Rules of the Parliamentary Group of Women include a provision explaining that the Group works with both national and international organizations in pursuit of equal rights between men and women.⁷⁷

Not all charters, by-laws, or standing rules will look the same. Some will include more sections and others fewer than suggested here. Each set of rules must above all reflect the particular structure and organization of a given caucus, which in turn will depend on the caucus's needs and the political and cultural context in which it functions.

Examples of rules documents adopted by women's caucuses around the world can be found in IPU's on-line database (www.ipu.org/wmn-e/caucus).

75. The Women Parliamentary Caucus Rules, Article 16, 2008.

76. Rules of the Grenada Women's Parliamentary Caucus, Article 6.

77. Rules of the Parliamentary Group of Women, Paragraph 8, 2012.



© Swiss Parliament

Two Swiss women Speakers at the Sixth Annual Meeting of Women Speakers of Parliament, Switzerland, 2010.

NOTES

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STEP 4

THE WOMEN'S CAUCUS IN ACTION

Maximizing the achievement of caucus objectives

This chapter examines the strategic planning, communication, evaluation and other activities needed for a women's caucus to function effectively in pursuit of its objectives. It looks in particular at caucus activities, strategies for effective action, communication, strategic planning and evaluation of the activities conducted.

1. HOW TO TRANSFORM OBJECTIVES INTO ACTION?

The long-term vision, goals and objectives of a caucus should ideally be included in its internal rules (see Step 2 (2) and Step 3 (6) above). Clarity on these points will make the caucus more effective.

The challenge lies in identifying and implementing actions to achieve caucus objectives. A strategic plan for operationalizing a caucus and achieving its objectives will be essential. It should include a list of the objectives and issues to be addressed, the activities planned to address them and a timeframe. The key is to ensure consistency between the plan and the caucus's long-term vision and goals. Such strategic plans should be updated regularly (e.g., every two to five years), further to an evaluation exercise.

All members of a caucus should be involved in identifying its short- and long-term goals, to ensure effective collaboration. A good strategic plan will also help to ensure effective planning and management of the caucus's programme of activities.

For examples of strategic plans please see Annex 2. Other examples are available in the IPU online database on women's parliamentary caucuses (www.ipu.org/wmn-e/caucus).

2. WHAT ACTIVITIES CAN A CAUCUS PERFORM?

The activities of a caucus depend on what it wants to accomplish. Caucuses engage in a range of activities to spread the word about the issues they support. The possibilities are endless, but a few of the most common activities are explained below.

QUESTIONS/ACTIONS

- **Identifying specific policy issues that require deeper examination, collecting data and conducting investigations** so as to strengthen the advocacy impact of the caucus – and also to encourage buy-in from other decision makers, inside and outside of parliament, for evidence-based legislative responses. These activities can in particular be undertaken in collaboration with universities and research institutions, or with civil society organizations.

In Pakistan, investigations into the plight of female acid burn victims, and the medical facilities available to treat them, have helped to raise awareness about such atrocities.⁷⁸ These efforts have led to funding for the establishment of burn units in district hospitals.⁷⁹ The Women Parliamentarian Caucus has also contributed to police reforms by visiting women's police stations and reporting on its findings. Among its recommendations to make the stations more effective, the caucus called for measures to increase the salaries of women police officers and make transport and adequate housing facilities more readily available to them.⁸⁰



First meeting of the Network of South Asian Women Parliamentarians, Sri Lanka, 2013.

78. An Introduction to Women's Parliamentary Caucus: Parliament of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan (Women's Parliamentary Caucus, 2009).

79. IPU, Gender-sensitive Parliaments, p. 49.

80. State of Women Policing: Report of the Women's Parliamentary Caucus based upon the visit of the Women Police Station in Islamabad Capital Territory November 29, 2008 (Women's Parliamentary Caucus, 2009). IPU, Gender-sensitive Parliaments, p. 49.

QUESTIONS/ACTIONS

- **Facilitating discussion among citizens and politicians**, through luncheons and briefings on issues of importance to the caucus, permitting contacts to be established among interested individuals. The development of networks among such individuals, both inside and outside of parliament, can be an important step towards effective advocacy, greater public awareness and parliamentary action.

In Finland, the Network of Women in Finland's Parliament hosts luncheons for parliamentarians and State ministers to encourage debate on important current affairs.⁸¹

In Uganda, the Women Parliamentary Association organized a seminar in partnership with the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Police on the enforcement of three laws it helped pass: the Domestic Violence Act, the Female Genital Mutilation Act and the Trafficking in Persons Act.⁸²

QUESTIONS/ACTIONS

- **Creating partnerships with other groups that defend the cause of women and gender equality, both within and outside of parliament**, to discuss specific problems and recommend viable solutions. This might consist of collaborating with women's organizations and other civil society groups, but also of developing continuous and formal relations with the committees or other organs of parliament responsible for gender and gender equality issues. Alliances have also been forged among a number of women's parliamentary caucuses in different countries.

In Burundi, the Association of Women Parliamentarians, with IPU support, organized a consultative seminar on the problem of gender-based violence. These wide-ranging consultations, involving some 100 stakeholders – from parliament, government ministries, human rights bodies, law enforcement agencies, civil society and the media – have helped to make legislative action in this area a high priority on the national political agenda.⁸³

In Argentina, the Women's Caucus confers annual awards on civil society leaders from across the country who contribute to the causes of gender equality and the human rights of women.⁸⁴

In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the Women's Parliamentary Club has established close relations with the Committee on equal opportunity for men and women. The chairperson of that Committee participates in the Club's coordination bureau, and the chairperson of the Club is officially invited to all of the Committee's sessions. This close relationship has resulted in strategic cooperation between the two bodies.⁸⁵

In Afghanistan and Pakistan, members of the women's parliamentary caucuses of each country have established mutual exchanges and meet regularly, in particular to work on the joint implementation of a peace process between their two countries.⁸⁶

81. www.iknowpolitics.org/sites/default/files/ndi-womens20caucus20fact20sheet_0.pdf

82. Uganda Women Parliamentary Association (UWOPA), Annual Report, 2012.

83. IPU and Parliament of Burundi, Rapport du séminaire consultatif sur les violences basées sur le genre au Burundi, Bujumbura, 18-19 July 2012 (French only).

84. Written comment provided by an Argentine woman parliamentarian, October 2013.

85. OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODHIR), A Comparative Study of Structures for Women MPs in the OSCE Region, 2013, p. 43.

86. Report on the first meeting of the Network of South Asian Women Parliamentarians, February 2013, p. 12.

QUESTIONS/ACTIONS

- **Raising the visibility of specific issues and caucus visibility** by organizing press conferences, interviews, and speeches.

In Iraq, a speech to parliament in 2010, given by a member of the Women Parliamentary Caucus on behalf of her caucus, explained the importance of including women in the government cabinet. To exclude women, she argued, would be to undermine democracy-building efforts. Parliament was at the time preparing to vote on cabinet appointments and form a new government. While eventually voting to support these appointments, and give the people a desperately awaited government, women members expressed disappointment over its ultimate composition (all-male). Appointments to the cabinet since that time have included women.⁸⁷

QUESTIONS/ACTIONS

- **Educating activists and citizens** by facilitating outreach events on issues important to specific constituencies.

In Ghana, breast cancer awareness and screening events, sponsored by the Women's Caucus in communities throughout the country, have enabled women to obtain breast cancer screening free of charge. The Caucus has been successful in getting men parliamentarians to promote these events as well, and to hold them for their own constituencies.⁸⁸

QUESTIONS/ACTIONS

- **Observing, analysing and learning from successful women's programmes and policies in different countries** through official visits to, and dialogue with, women politicians in such countries. Learning from other countries' successful gender programmes can help parliamentarians propose and justify the adoption of similar programmes in their own countries.

In Namibia, members of the Women's Caucus visited China to learn about the kinds of women's programmes, including those conducted by the Women's Federation, that have been successfully implemented there – governmentally or otherwise. The aim is to learn from their successes and identify the kinds of programmes best suited for implementation in Namibia.⁸⁹

87. Interview with a Iraqi woman MP during the 125th IPU Assembly, Bern, Switzerland, October 2011. thecurrencynewshound.com/2010/12/21/iraqs-new-government-approved-by-parliament/

88. Interview with a Ghanaian woman MP during the 125th IPU Assembly, Bern, Switzerland, October 2011.

89. Interview with a Namibian woman MP during the 125th IPU Assembly, Bern, Switzerland, October 2011.

3. HOW CAN A CAUCUS ORGANIZE ITS WORK?

Some caucuses have subcommittees focused on different issues, enabling members to specialize and gain comfort in particular areas, and the caucus to function more smoothly. Such a setup, however, precludes the possibility of all members working on all issues, potentially creating tensions – particularly if members are not allowed to choose their respective subcommittees.

In Ethiopia, the Caucus of Women Parliamentarians has five such subcommittees.⁹⁰

In Sudan, the Women's Parliamentarian Caucus has five sub-committees for specific issues, ranging from legal initiation to external relations to capacity building.⁹¹

4. STRATEGIES FOR ENSURING AN EFFECTIVE CAUCUS

There are a few important strategies that can make a caucus more effective:

- ✎ **A clear focus on goals and objectives.** A caucus needs to periodically review and reassess its objectives. The right balance needs to be achieved between flexibility and selective focus. A caucus should be open to seeing its objectives evolve in tune with the political environment, but without sacrificing clarity or forgetting the efforts required to define its original purpose. The work of a caucus also warrants regular monitoring and evaluation, and the documentation of activities, results and achievements.
- ✎ **Partnership and outreach, both within and beyond parliament.** Caucuses can increase their effectiveness by building relationships with like-minded organizations: NGOs, political parties, research centres, regional groups and others. Such organizations may be willing to sponsor or support an event or partner with a caucus to work on specific issues. To gain passage of their proposed changes, women's parliamentary caucuses must also build relations with the powers that be within parliament, and particularly with committees responsible for gender and gender equality issues. Caucuses might also want to maintain partnerships with former caucus members, who could serve as mentors for newly elected parliamentarians.
- ✎ **Funding**, as noted above, is essential to the successful functioning of a caucus. To manage that funding responsibly, control spending and guide fundraising efforts, caucuses need to develop an operating budget. The operating budget of a typical caucus might include administrative/staff expenses, legislative expenses (drafting, advocacy), and expenses for research, capacity-building (training), constituent services and special events.⁹² In their efforts to raise project funding, caucuses may focus on establishing relationships with potential donor organizations or on writing and submitting funding proposals. For information about the funding agencies and organizations that support women's caucuses, financially and otherwise, please see Annex 1.
- ✎ **Communication**, both internal and external, is essential. There must be clear and open lines of communication inside the caucus so that ideas can flow freely and all members can be on the same page. Caucuses should brainstorm about ways to publicize their work and communicate with other parliamentarians and parliamentary authorities. Outside of parliament, caucuses need to communicate with civil society and the general public. Some caucuses have established communication plans to target their communication efforts and determine how information will be circulated. Examples of communication plans established by women's parliamentary caucuses can be found in the IPU online database (www.ipu.org/wmn-e/caucus).

90. Women parliamentarian from Ethiopia, interviewed during the 125th Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly, Bern, Switzerland, October 2011.

91. Women parliamentarian from Sudan, interviewed December 2012.

92. Susan A. Markham. "Strengthening women in parliament." www.ipu.org/splz-e/asgp11/Markham.doc.

5. THE DURABILITY OF WOMEN'S PARLIAMENTARY CAUCUSES

Here is an issue of considerable importance. Will a caucus be automatically renewed with each new legislature, or will caucus members need to re-establish it after each legislative election? The answer depends first on the caucus's more or less formal nature. A caucus that forms part of parliament's internal structure will probably be renewed automatically with each new legislature. Other factors, however, will also come into play, and in particular the possibility that several members of the group might not be re-elected, the interest shown in the issue by their newly elected replacements, and the time they wish to devote to it.

One way to convince new members to attend to women's parliamentary caucuses is to develop its institutional memory with living reminders of its achievements and successes as well as its day-to-day functioning.⁹³



Meeting of Women Parliamentarians, 128th IPU Assembly, Quito, Ecuador, March 2013.

93. OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODHIR), A Comparative Study of Structures for Women MPs in the OSCE Region, 2013, p. 69.

6. PUBLICIZING THE WORK OF A CAUCUS

A caucus needs to reach out to citizens and relevant organizations so that they know of its existence and understand its initiatives. This dialogue is crucial for mobilizing support for the caucus's agenda and its related activities.

Hosting public events and participating in radio and TV programmes are great ways to increase visibility, heighten public awareness about policy issues and galvanize support for an initiative. Websites, newsletters and social networks have also been used successfully to disseminate information about caucus activities. As part of this communication effort, members should not hesitate to celebrate the caucus's achievements.

LINKS TO EXPLORE

In Uruguay, the Women's Caucus has a website accessible through the main web page of Uruguay's parliament: www.parlamento.gub.uy/externos/parlamentaria/bbf.html

In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, a section of the parliament's website is dedicated to the members and achievements of the Women's Parliamentary Club: www.sobranie.mk/en/default-en.asp?ItemID=67565069A096614ABD4409DAC7B64007

In the United States of America, an organization known as Women's Policy, Inc. runs the website on the Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues: www.womenspolicy.org/site/PageServer?pagename=womens_caucus

7. HOW TO KNOW IF A CAUCUS IS SUCCESSFUL

Periodic monitoring and capacity-building are essential to the effective functioning of a caucus. Current activities should be reviewed to ensure that they are advancing the caucus's objectives. If those objectives include the passage of legislation on girls' education or women's citizenship rights, for instance, then success would be measured by incremental steps toward the passage of such legislation (e.g. a bill drafted, a bill introduced in committee, etc.). If the caucus is not enjoying such success, then capacity-building efforts, such as training to improve legislative drafting ability, may be necessary.

If a caucus is not meeting its objectives, then its plan of action and the strategies developed to implement it need to be reworked. The information obtained from monitoring should be evaluated, analysed, and applied to making the caucus more effective. An important question to answer during this process concerns the barriers being faced by the caucus and how can they be addressed to better meet caucus goals.

In Rwanda, in preparing its new Strategic Plan for 2013-2018, the Forum of Women Parliamentarians reviewed the implementation of its previous plan, identified lessons learned and designed a new plan for the next five years. IPU assisted the caucus in this process.⁹⁴

94. Forum des femmes rwandaises parlementaires (FFRP), Strategic Plan 2013-2018.

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CONCLUSION: CELEBRATING THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF WOMEN'S CAUCUSES

Each women's parliamentary caucus is unique. It is the reflection of a particular political context and of objectives formulated by consensus among women parliamentarians in any given country. The usefulness of this innovative mechanism has been demonstrated time and again. It allows women to unite around goals that transcend their political differences and steer parliaments toward decisions that better respond to the needs and interests of women, as well as men.

Despite the difficulties they face, women's parliamentary caucuses have chalked up some significant success stories. Thanks to the energy, perseverance and creativity of their members they can boast today of numerous concrete accomplishments. As illustrated by the examples provided in these *Guidelines*, caucuses have played a decisive role in the development and application of laws and policies on important gender issues, including gender equality, women's representation in decision-making posts, violence against women and women's health needs, as well as issues related to the family, peace processes and human rights. Caucuses have also been successful in building bridges between parliaments, women's movements and civil society in general, thereby engaging citizens - men and women - in parliamentary affairs and involving them in legislative activities.

These *Guidelines* are based on experiences reported by women who are active in parliamentary caucuses in various parts of the world, with the aim of helping their colleagues create, strengthen and effectively operate their own caucuses. To remain fresh and relevant, these *Guidelines* must be updated to reflect the initiatives undertaken by women's caucuses to respond to the challenges of our constantly evolving societies.



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IPU Advisory Group on HIV/AIDS Field Visit to Tanzania, 2012.

We therefore invite women parliamentarians who apply these *Guidelines* to share their experiences in so doing, together with other information about their caucuses. Such contributions will enable us to update these *Guidelines* regularly, incorporating new issues, original strategies, and fresh examples. They will also be incorporated into IPU's database on women's parliamentary caucuses (www.ipu.org/wmn-e/caucus), which is intended to provide a global showcase for their work and accomplishments. Women's caucuses provide a forum for women parliamentarians, in whatever country they serve, to exchange their experiences and benefit from the experiences of others. Such information exchanges will help to strengthen women's solidarity on matters that transcend political divisions and national borders.



ANNEX 1

CAUCUS SUPPORT

Many organizations provide technical and financial support to women's caucuses. While not exhaustive the following list may be helpful to caucuses seeking such support.

INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION (IPU), GENDER PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME

This IPU programme works for the promotion of women in parliament and the enhancement of parliament's contribution to gender equality. Activities of the Programme include provision of research and tools; training and capacity-building for members of parliament and parliamentary staff; technical expertise on policy and legislation; and platforms for members of parliament to exchange experience. Within that framework, the Programme supports the establishment, smooth running and activities of women's caucuses. Such support is based on a needs assessment conducted with the caucuses concerned. It takes the form of expert advice, technical assistance, training sessions, inter-parliamentary exchanges and the provision of comparative information and examples of good practice. IPU can also contribute to the development of projects and help identify sources of financing.

Furthermore, IPU collates in an online database information on women's caucuses throughout the world. It also provides statistics on women in politics and examples of good practices in.

For more information please see www.ipu.org/;
and **the IPU database** on women's caucuses at www.ipu.org/wmn-e/caucus.
The Gender Partnership Programme can be contacted by email at gpp@ipu.org.

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR DEMOCRACY AND ELECTORAL ASSISTANCE (INTERNATIONAL IDEA)

International IDEA provides comparative information and publications on gender and democracy, runs workshops and conferences for the exchange of ideas and best practices, and conducts projects and initiatives in specific countries with the aim of spreading and supporting democracy around the world.

The Senior Programme Manager for Democracy and Gender, Rumbidzai Kandawasvika-Nhundu, can be reached at r.kandawasvika-nhundu@idea.int.

INTERNATIONAL KNOWLEDGE NETWORK OF WOMEN IN POLITICS (IKNOW POLITICS)

iKNOW Politics is an online resource where politicians, experts, students, and others can access information, engage in conversation, share experiences and success stories, and learn from one another.

For resources in English, French, Spanish and Arabic please visit:
www.iknowpolitics.org

INTERNATIONAL REPUBLICAN INSTITUTE (IRI), WOMEN'S DEMOCRACY NETWORK

The Women's Democracy Network is an initiative of the IRI aimed at increasing women's political participation, leadership and representation in elected office. It accomplishes this goal by linking women with their peers around the world, providing mentorship and skills-building training sessions.

For more information please see www.wdn.org

NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE (NDI), WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION PROGRAMME

NDI is an NGO that offers training to women parliamentarians as well as support in setting up or strengthening women's caucuses. Organizations promoting women's political participation can apply for NDI's Madeline K. Albright Grant.

For more information please see www.ndi.org/womens-political-participation

OSCE OFFICE FOR DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS AND HUMAN RIGHTS (ODIHR)

In cooperation with field operations and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, ODIHR provides support to OSCE country parliaments interested in establishing or revitalizing parliamentary women's caucuses, by disseminating research, facilitating the transfer of good practices and other means.

For more information please see: www.osce.org/odhr/gender, or www.osce.org/odhr/demgov

UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (UNDP)

UNDP funds development projects around the world that seek to empower women. In connection with the UN Millennium Development Goals it offers a Gender Thematic Trust Fund for projects promoting gender equality.

For general information please visit www.unpd.org.

For more information about the Gender Thematic Trust Fund, the manager, Blerta Cela, can be reached at blerta.cela@undp.org.



UN WOMEN

UN Women also provides technical and programme assistance to women's caucuses. Grants are available from UN Women through the Fund for Gender Equality and the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women.

For more information about UN Women's work please visit:

www.unwomen.org/how-we-work



ANNEX 2

STRATEGIC PLANS

A time-bound strategic plan, laying out short-term goals, objectives and a general work plan in pursuance of a long-term vision, is incredibly important for the efficient and effective functioning of a women's caucus. Strategic plans usually include information about how their goals will be accomplished. This annex provides two examples of strategic plans developed by the women's parliamentary caucuses of Vietnam and Peru. Other examples can be found in the IPU database on women's parliamentary caucuses (www.ipu.org/wmn-e/caucus).

VIETNAM:

ACTION PLAN OF THE VIETNAM FEMALE MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT GROUP (VFMPG)

I. VFMPG Activities Through 2016

- Keep MPs informed on issues of gender, gender equality and the role of female parliamentarians as they pertain to the agenda for Vietnam's National Assembly term XIII.
- Improve gender awareness and skill in analysing gender issues among female members of the National Assembly, creating forums enabling them to exchange experiences in mainstreaming gender into the legislative and policy-making processes.
- Promote advocacy and fundraising networks among female MPs and involve them in the activities of VFMPG.
- Organize multilateral and bilateral forums on critical global issues, such as the prevention and control of human trafficking, marriage between Vietnamese women and foreign nationals, violence against women, enabling female MPs to exchange experiences in gender mainstreaming.

II. Tentative Annual Workplan for 2013

- Advocate VFMPG positions in the domestic and international arenas through the Group's Standing Board and the National Assembly's Committee for Social Affairs.
- Collaborate with the National Assembly's Committee for Social Affairs, the Vietnam Women's Union and the National Committee for the Advancement of Women, in overseeing implementation of the Law on Gender Equality.
- Develop working relationships with female MP groups in other countries.
- Organize a workshop on gender mainstreaming skills.
- Organize a workshop on gender and the Land Law.
- Organize a meeting on the "how women work in modern industrial economies"
- Develop a 2014 budget for VFMPG as part of the budget of the Committee for Social Affairs.

III. Implementation

- VFMPG's Standing Board, in cooperation with the National Assembly's Committee for Social Affairs, will be in charge of organizing activities and maximizing the participation of VFMPG members.
- VFMPG will collaborate closely with the Vietnam Women's Union, the National Committee for the Advancement of Women, and the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs in implementing gender equality goals, laws and policies and advocating gender equality through comprehensive measures.
- VFMPG will mobilize the resources needed to facilitate its activities.
- The VFMPG's Standing Board will meet twice a year to exchange experiences and develop the Group's work plan. VFMPG will be divided into three sub-groups for the northern, central and southern regions, composed of women MPs from each sub-region.
- The Department for Social Affairs of the National Assembly Office will be responsible for assisting VFMPG operations.

PERU: PERUVIAN PARLIAMENTARY WOMEN'S CAUCUS STRATEGIC PLAN 2006-2011⁹⁵

Objectives 2006 – 2011

- ✚ Highlight the role of women and promote gender mainstreaming while respecting cultural differences.
- ✚ Promote the active participation of women as agents of change.
- ✚ Solidify the Peruvian Parliamentary Women's Caucus nationally and internationally.

Operating Plan 2006–2007 – Thematic Areas

- ✚ Gender, democracy and political participation.
- ✚ Gender and poverty: exclusion/discrimination vs. social inclusion.
- ✚ Monitoring of compliance with international commitments on women's issues.
- ✚ Gender mainstreaming in public policies; national, regional and local plans; state practices; and legal norms.
- ✚ Civil society participation in gender mainstreaming.

Legislative Agenda, 2006

- ✚ Equal Opportunity Law.
- ✚ Electoral system reform.
- ✚ Sexual & Reproductive Health Law.
- ✚ Elimination of all forms of discrimination.
- ✚ Reforms for inclusive, equitable education.
- ✚ Criminal Code reforms to eliminate violence against women and children.
- ✚ Measures for women's economic integration.
- ✚ Gender mainstreaming in national, regional and local budgets.
- ✚ Review of the Civil Participation and Oversight Law.
- ✚ Law on Living Original Languages.
- ✚ Modifications to Integral Health Insurance for women's health care.
- ✚ Modifications to the penitentiary system to improve conditions for female prisoners and their children.
- ✚ Norms to help young women and men enter the labour market.
- ✚ Inclusion of gender variables in national statistics.
- ✚ Monitoring of Truth Commission recommendations on women.

95. IPU, Gender-sensitive Parliaments, pp. 50-51.

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ISBN 978-92-9142-587-7 (IPU)

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Original version: English

Cover design and layout by Laurence Duchemin and Michel Favre, Le Cadratin, Plagne, France
Printed in France by ICA



INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION