Parliamentary exchange: Multi-party caucuses for gender equality

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Promoting gender sensitive parliaments: The case for multi-party caucuses for gender equality
Have we achieved gender equality?

- No country has achieved gender equality.
- **Discrimination in the law** persists in many countries, particularly in family law.
- Educational attainment and rising participation in the labour market have not been matched with better conditions and equal pay.
- Heavy and intense **unpaid care workloads** limit women’s enjoyment of human rights.
- **Violence against women and girls** persists in many forms.
- Widespread **violations of sexual and reproductive health and rights**.
- Women continue to be excluded from decision-making at all levels in public and private spheres.
What will it take?

- Address discriminatory social norms and gender stereotypes
- Attention to multiple discrimination, inequalities and the most marginalized
- Make the economy work for gender equality and sustainable development
- Significantly increase investments in gender equality
- Ensure full and equal participation of women at all levels
- Make our institutions more accountable to women
Key message

Gender targeted strategies

Gender mainstreaming strategies

Gender equality
Gender equality

- refers to the **equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities** of women and men and girls and boys.

- does **not mean that women and men are the same**: but rather that women’s and men’s rights, responsibilities and opportunities will **not depend** on whether they are born male or female.

- implies that the **interests, needs and priorities** of both women and men are **taken into consideration**, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men.

- is **not a women’s issue** but concerns and should fully engage men as well as women.
Gender targeted strategies

- seek to tackle **specific areas** where women are unrepresented or disadvantaged, including through the adoption of temporary special measures.

- **Temporary Special Measures** (TSMs) are specific measures taken to accelerate the equal participation of women in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.
  - Electoral gender quotas (reserved seats, candidate quotas)
  - Capacity development programmes, special media and advocacy campaigning, campaign financing support
  - Preference given to a woman over a man in recruitment/promotion selection processes when candidatures are equal
Gender mainstreaming

“The process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels.

It is a strategy for making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetrated.”

Economic and Social Council, 1997
Gender sensitive parliaments

The Inter-Parliamentary Union defines a GSP as:

“An institution that responds to the needs and interests of both men and women in its structures, operations, methods and in its work.”

- Removes the barriers to women’s full participation
- Offers a positive example or role model to society at large
- Creates a workplace that is attractive for women

Achieved by implementing both gender targeted and gender mainstreaming strategies
Building momentum for multi-party gender caucuses
Parliamentary caucuses

- Caucus
  - Simply a group of parliamentarians, with a specific issue focus – e.g. population and development; gender equality, etc.
  - Differentiated from a parliamentary committee by its rules and powers, functions

- Women’s caucus
  - Usually composed only of women MPs

- Parliamentary caucus on gender equality
  - Could be comprised of men and women, but with the principal objective of advancing gender equality
‘Added value’

Caucuses can:

- promote women’s descriptive and substantive representation.
- serve to ensure that gender equality issues are mainstreamed into legislative and policy processes, and within parliamentary processes.
- influence policy and legislative agendas through cross-party co-operation.
- facilitate dialogue within and across parties.
- provide training and support to their members, as well as information and analysis.
One size does not fit all

Source: OSCE ODIHR, 2013, A Comparative Study of Structures for Women MPs, Warsaw, Poland, p. 22
Key challenges

- The **low number** of women MPs and parliamentary leaders (Speaker, committee chair)
- Strict political **party discipline**
- **Limited funding** and resources
- Lack of **perceived legitimacy** within the parliament
- **Workload** and political priorities of MPs
Assessing the landscape

- 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?
Mapping of power

Take 10 minutes to identify:

- Who are the stakeholders who need to be lobbied to create a caucus in your parliament?
  - List them in order of power and influence.

- What arguments would convince those stakeholders to establish a caucus?
  - Do you need to devise different arguments for different stakeholders?
Aligning objectives with modus operandi
Key message

Defined Objectives + Defined Structure = Effective caucus
Objectives

- 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.
Question of purpose

- What do you think would be the **objective** of a caucus in your country?
  - Limit the objectives to no more than 3.
Questions of membership and leadership

- How will the membership be decided?
  - Should there be a membership fee?
  - Would it be voluntary? Exclusive to women?

- Should the Speaker be involved?

- Who would chair the caucus?
  - Should the chair be shared by all parties?
  - Should there be a rotation of the leadership across the political parties?
  - Should men and women co-chair?
Questions of structure

- Would a formal or informal structure work best?
  - Should the caucus be a formal body of the parliament and included in the rules of parliament?

- How often would the caucus meet and how would decisions be made?
  - Consensus; by majority vote?

- What powers would the caucus have?
  - Similar to parliamentary committees – call witnesses, papers, question Ministers?
  - How will the caucus report to Parliament? Oral/written report

- Would the caucus have dedicated staff, a meeting room, financial resources?
Questions of partnership

- What relationship will the caucus have to the parliament, and other parliamentary bodies (e.g. committees)?

- How will the caucus work with women’s organisations and other civil society groups?

- Will the caucus interact with the media? Will it have a social media presence?

- Other groups: universities/think tanks; ombudsperson; international organisations
Let’s put it together

Take 30 minutes:

- Using the template provided on pages 35-36 of Guidelines for Women’s Caucuses (IPU 2013), develop a model set of standing orders to establish your caucus.

- You may wish to consult the IPU database on gender equality caucuses at: http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/instanceadvanced.asp

- Report back in country groups
Setting priorities for action in gender caucuses
+ Linking objectives to actions

- **Gender sensitising the parliament and its workplace practices** through self-assessments and training members in gender analysis.

- **Examining specific policy issues** through data collection and conducting investigations so as to strengthen the advocacy impact of the caucus.

- **Facilitating discussion among citizens and politicians**, through luncheons and briefings on issues of importance to the caucus, establishing contacts among interested individuals.

- **NB**: These activities can in particular be undertaken in collaboration with universities and research institutions, or with civil society organizations.
IPU Plan of Action for Gender-Sensitive Parliaments

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

- The number of women in parliament and their positions
  Are there any measures to guarantee women’s access to positions of leadership in the parliament?

- The legal and policy framework for gender equality in the parliament
  Does parliament analyse laws from a gender perspective, so as to measure their differing impacts on men and women?

- Gender mainstreaming in the parliament’s work
  What mechanisms or structures are used to mainstream gender equality in the work of the parliament?

- The culture of parliament
  Are there discriminatory and derogatory stereotypes about women in parliament? If so, how can these be eliminated?

- Are men and political parties gender sensitive?
  Is gender understood to also concern men? How do political parties develop their policies on gender equality?
How gender sensitive is your parliament?

- Is a self-assessment something that your parliament should undertake?
- What changes do you think a self-assessment would recommend?
The 2030 Agenda

- 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted in September 2015, covering poverty, hunger, health, education, water and sanitation, employment, safe cities and peace and security.

- These goals are universal – all countries will need to monitor and report on progress according to targets and indicators.

- Gender equality and women’s rights are reflected both as a cross-cutting theme and a priority area.
Goal 5: Achieve GE & empower all women & girls

- 5.1. End all forms of discrimination against women & girls
- 5.2. Eliminate all forms of violence against all women & girls
- 5.3. Eliminate all harmful practices (e.g. child marriage, FGM)
- 5.4. Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work
- 5.5. Ensure women’s full & effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making
- 5.6. Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights

- 5.a. Ensure women’s equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land & assets
- 5.b. Enhance role of ICTs to empower women
- 5.c. Adopt & strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality & the empowerment of all women & girls at all levels
Mainstreaming gender equality across the SDGs

A new report identifies 16 indicators for girls and women across 8 goals that are Ready to Measure now:

1. No Poverty
2. Zero Hunger
3. Good Health and Well-being
4. Quality Education
5. Gender Equality
6. Decent Work and Economic Growth
7. Reduced Inequalities
8. Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions
How will your parliament monitor the SDGs – especially SDG5?

- Would a gender caucus be useful in monitoring the SDGs in your parliament, or has another mechanism been established?
- How would your gender caucus monitor the SDGs?
Gender analysis of legislation

- Presents an analysis of the impact of an issue on women and men – which will most likely be different
- Investigates the context – gender relations, the resources, institutional changes – and strategies needed to solve problems and minimise disadvantage
- Uses a participatory and inclusive approach, and identifies barriers to inclusive participation
- Establishes baseline data, and ensures data collection is broken down by sex
- Identifies risks for women and men and monitors and evaluates change for men and women
Ensuring sex disaggregated data

- Data are **collected** and **presented** by sex as a primary and overall classification;

- Data reflect **gender issues**;

- Data are based on **concepts and definitions** that adequately reflect the **diversity** of women and men and capture all aspects of their lives;

- Data collection methods take into account **stereotypes and social and cultural factors** that may induce **gender bias** in the data (e.g. under-reporting)

- Good example: World Bank: Gender Equality Data and Statistics
  [http://datatopics.worldbank.org/gender/]
Developing tools for gender mainstreaming: the checklist

- Who is the target of a proposed policy, programme or project?

- Who will benefit? Who will lose?

- Have women and men been consulted on the issue being addressed?

- Who makes the decisions? Have women and men been involved in the development of a solution to address the issue?

- Who uses the resources? How are the resources procured?

- Does the intervention maintain or challenge existing gender relations?
Does your parliament currently analyse legislation from a gender perspective?

- What resources does your parliament have to analyse legislation from a gender perspective?
  - Staff?
  - Access to gender resources and sex disaggregated data?
  - Tools to analyse legislation – checklists?
  - Involving citizens and civil society organisations (including women’s organisations)?

- How would a gender caucus advocate for these resources?
Strategic planning

- Long-term **vision, goals and objectives** of a caucus should ideally be included in its **internal rules**

- A **strategic plan** for operationalizing a caucus and achieving its objectives is essential. It should include:
  - a **list of the objectives** and issues to be addressed,
  - the **activities** planned to address them and
  - a **timeframe**.

- Strategic plans should be **updated regularly** (e.g., every two to five years), further to an evaluation exercise.
Conclusions
Key message

Gender equality

Gender targeted strategies

Gender mainstreaming strategies
Key message

Defined Objectives + Defined Structure = Effective caucus
Communication

- **Clear and open lines of communication inside** the caucus so that ideas can flow freely and all members can be on the same page.

- Brainstorm about ways to publicize the work of the caucus and communicate **with other parliamentarians and parliamentary authorities**.

- Outside of parliament, caucuses need to **communicate with civil society and the general public** (e.g. through social media).

- Some caucuses have established **communication plans** to target their communication efforts and determine how information will be circulated.
Communication

- Host public events and participate in radio and TV programmes
- Advertise your work through websites, newsletters and social networks
- Celebrate the caucus’s achievements
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Evaluation

- Activities should be reviewed to ensure that they are advancing the caucus’s objectives.
  - E.g. Success in passing legislation can be measured with reference to:
    - Drafting the bill,
    - Awareness raised on the importance of the bill (members, public, media)
    - Introducing and reviewing the bill in committee,
    - Recommendations approved by government;
    - Vote taken in parliament
    - Law passed

- Not meeting objectives?
  - Review the strategy! Revise the objective?
  - Consider what are the barriers and how can they be addressed?
What indicators could you use to determine your caucuses’ progress in meeting its objectives?

What are the ‘baselines’?

What data sources would you use to measure progress?

Are there are means to ‘verify’ your achievements?
Strategies for Success

- Prioritise your objectives
- Clarify relationship to the parliament
- Sustain strong relationships with CSOs and gender advocates
- Find consensus on issues and priorities and celebrate achievements
- Adopt action or strategic plans, with targets and indicators to monitor and evaluate progress
- Seek support from international organisations