Extracted from *Atlas of Electoral Gender Quotas*
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Electoral gender quotas – a major electoral reform

Gender quotas are numerical targets that stipulate the number or percentage of women that must be included in a candidate list or the number of seats to be allocated to women in a legislature. They aim to reverse discrimination in law and practice and to level the playing field for women and men in politics. Gender quotas, as they mostly regulate political parties’ actions, underscore the notion of political parties as the ‘gatekeepers’ through which citizens pursue opportunities for political leadership (Dahlerup 2006). Therefore quotas play a critical role in providing meaningful and effective opportunities for female party members to access elected public offices. To date, gender quotas have proved to be the single most effective tool for ‘fast-tracking’ women’s representation in elected bodies of government. It is, however, important to note that as an extensive body of research in this field suggests, quotas may have a differential impact in different contexts and in different electoral systems and may take longer than a single electoral cycle to produce the desired impact. Furthermore, electoral gender quotas do not remove all structural, institutional and societal barriers for women in politics, and need to be complemented by other measures designed to level the playing field for women.

There are three key types of gender quotas in politics:

1. Legislated candidate quotas – These quotas regulate the gender composition of the candidate lists and are binding by law for all political parties in the election; they are mandated either through national constitutions or by electoral legislation.

2. Legislated ‘reserved seats’ – These measures regulate by law the gender composition of elected bodies, by reserving a certain number or percentage of seats for women members, implemented through special electoral procedures; they are mandated either through national constitutions or by electoral legislation.

3. Party quotas (also called voluntary party quotas) – These quotas are adopted by individual parties for their own candidate lists, and are usually enshrined in party statutes and rules.

All key types of gender quotas are increasingly used around the world to promote women’s political participation and representation. To date, some 118\(^{5}\) countries and territories—more than half of all—use some type of gender quota for an elected office. Based on the information presented in this Atlas, 60 countries and territories/special areas around the world use legislated candidate quotas (which may be used in conjunction with reserved seats or voluntary party quotas), 36 countries and territories/special areas use the system of reserved seats (few of which also use legislated candidate quotas as well) and in 37 countries and territories at least one political party represented in parliament uses a voluntary party quota (countries with both, legislated candidate quotas for national legislatures and voluntary party quotas are excluded from this number). Please see Annex A for a full list of countries in these three categories. The lists presented there include countries with legislated candidate quotas, reserved seats and voluntary party quotas for the composition of lower or upper houses or both, and/or sub-national elected bodies.
Out of the 37 countries that as of November 2013 have more than 30 per cent or more women in the lower houses of parliament, 30 (81 per cent) use some type of gender quota. In particular, 14 countries (38 per cent) use legislated candidate quotas, ten (27 per cent) use voluntary party quotas, six (16 per cent) use a reserved seat system and only seven (19 per cent) do not use any type of quotas (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Use of various types of gender quotas among countries with 30 per cent or more women in parliament (single or lower houses)

Why quotas?

The spread of gender quotas—both voluntary party quotas among some early adopters in Western European countries and legislated quotas later in countries around the world—was underpinned by the conviction that, given the slow rise in the number of women in parliaments, achieving true gender parity in representation would take several decades without special measures. The growing application of gender quotas as a policy tool draws on the theory that women in legislatures are more likely to have a policy impact that benefits other women and promotes gender equality when they are represented in significant numbers (i.e., when they reach a ‘critical mass’, which has been defined by researchers and practitioners as 30 per cent). Some have however challenged this 30 per cent threshold, arguing against one standard threshold for a ‘critical mass’ of women in all political and social contexts (Dahlerup 2006; Bratton 2005, Thomas 1994).

The normative framework for the use of quotas is based on a wide range of international and national commitments and principles pertaining to the equality of rights and opportunities for women and men to participate in (and be elected to) decision-making structures. These include internationally binding conventions such as the International Covenant on Civil
and Political Rights (1966) and the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), regionally adopted human rights treaties such as the American Convention on Human Rights (1969), the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights (1981) and its Protocol on Women (2003) and the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (2007), the European Convention on Human Rights (1950), as well as various declarations adopted at the international, regional and sub-regional levels. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, served to galvanize international and national actions in this regard, calling on governments to implement special measures (including through the use of affirmative action) to ensure the equal participation of women and men in decision making ‘in order to strengthen democracy and promote its proper functioning’.8

Gender quotas are considered necessary affirmative action measures to ‘realize de facto or substantive equality for women, rather than an exception to the norms of non-discrimination and equality’.9 Furthermore, as with other forms of special measures aimed at improving women’s ability to achieve de facto equality with men, gender quotas for elected offices are considered temporary measures, to be ‘discontinued when the objectives of equality of opportunity and treatment have been achieved’ (CEDAW Convention, Article 4).10 However, legislated gender quotas have not yet been discontinued in any country for this reason. Where such laws have lapsed and failed to be renewed, it has always been due to a lack of political will among parties in legislatures to institute effective special measures to improve women’s representation.11 The recent case of revoking previous quota legislation in Egypt in the run-up to the 2011 election resulted in a decrease in women’s representation from 13 per cent (elected in 2010 with the use of reserved seats) to 2 per cent in 2011. In Denmark, various political parties have used voluntary gender quotas with high thresholds, such as a minimum of 40 per cent female candidates from the late 1970s to the 1990s, and subsequently discontinued them while maintaining a relatively high number of women in parliament (currently 39 per cent).

Yet an increasing number of countries provide a gender quota aimed at ensuring that legislatures reflect the principles of gender balance and the equal representation of both sexes. Examples include countries with a requirement for alternation of female and male candidates on candidate lists such as Bolivia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, France, Kenya, the Republic of Korea, Lesotho, Libya, Nicaragua, Senegal, Tunisia, and Zimbabwe. Such laws reflect core, universal and permanent principles upon which democratic institutions should be based, rather than special measures as defined in the CEDAW convention.

Interestingly, there is a new trend among countries that adopted gender quotas in the 1990s and early 2000s to revise and enhance their quota laws, either by increasing the minimum percentage of each gender or by changing the rank-order rules for the electoral lists, as in Armenia, Belgium, Bolivia, Ecuador, France, Mexico and Morocco.

Some countries use other types of quota systems—albeit non-gender specific and therefore outside the scope of this publication—to ensure the representation of various minorities based on regional, ethnic, linguistic or religious cleavages. Other systems provide quotas for youth representation in legislatures12 or geographical quotas to ensure a minimum representation for densely populated areas or islands, for example.
So what do quotas actually do, and how do they work? In a nutshell, gender quota rules provide the minimum number of women (or women and men) that candidate lists should include (legislated candidate quotas and voluntary party quotas) or the number of seats that should be allocated to women in legislatures (reserved seats for women). The introduction of a quota system is aimed at ‘placing the burden of recruitment not on the individual woman, but on those who control the recruitment process’ (Dahlerup 2006). Such new rules are intended to transform the way in which parties choose their candidates, by making political parties look for potential female candidates in a more serious and committed way, recruit more women for political positions, and thus become more gender-balanced in their internal composition and in their parliamentary groups/delegations.

Thus quotas may relate to three distinct environments in which women usually face disproportionate challenges:

1. quotas for women as aspirants (i.e. for selecting women from among eligible individuals as potential candidates)—used in electoral systems with single-member districts, instituted through party rules, practised by parties in the UK, Australia and Canada (such practices are not detailed in this report, as they are broadly categorized as voluntary party quotas due to their non-legislated nature);

2. candidate quotas for selecting women to be included on candidate lists—used in multi-member districts for proportional representation (PR) or majority/plurality systems, legislated in national laws or agreed upon within parties (see Annex A/Table A1); and

3. reserved seats for women (codified through national constitutions or electoral laws)—quota rules enshrined in constitutions, electoral codes or other related acts are binding on all electoral subjects and are often enforced through sanctions administered by authorized national agencies, such as electoral commissions, electoral tribunals or other judicial organs (see Annex A/Table A2).

Why are women under-represented?

Any discussion of adopting gender quotas should consider why women are under-represented in political life in a particular country, given their share in the total population and among qualified voters. The answer to this question is crucial for choosing the right strategy to remedy this inequality.

In the global survey of parliamentarians conducted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union in 2008, women parliamentarians identified the following factors as the most significant obstacles in pursuing successful political careers: domestic responsibilities; prevailing cultural attitudes regarding the roles of women in society; lack of support from the family; lack of confidence; lack of finances; and lack of support from political parties. Male parliamentarians surveyed identified the lack of support from the electorate as the single most important deterrent, followed by a lack of financial resources and saw the prevailing cultural attitudes as one of the least important factors influencing their participation in politics.
The results of past research and analysis of political processes and institutions point to a paramount challenge—access to political decision-making is influenced by the dominant gender norms, attitudes and stereotypes in a given society. This key realization has driven a global shift away from women’s alleged lack of adequate qualifications as the principal reason for their under-representation to a new focus on reviewing and reforming unfair and discriminatory laws and practices into more inclusive, transparent and equitable ones.

An increasing amount of research and comparative analysis, as well as internationally agreed commitments and recommendations, is focused on efforts to understand and reform structural and institutional barriers for women in politics. These include deconstructing intra-party decision-making rules and informal practices and the nature of candidate selection and nomination processes, analysing the impact of electoral systems and the opportunities or barriers they create for women’s chances of being elected, dissecting patterns in political fundraising and campaign spending by female and male candidates, and other critical aspects of gender-based analysis of electoral processes.

**Candidate-selection processes**

How does a given party select candidates? Is it formalized and transparent, or do nominations take place within an ‘old boys’ network’—in closed circles that de facto exclude most women as well as groups of marginalized communities and minorities? In PR electoral systems, it is important to be placed by one’s party at the top of the list, but how and where is the rank order of the candidate list decided? Is there a nomination committee, and if yes, who appoints its members? Are the selection criteria transparent? In first-past-the-post (FPTP) systems with single-member districts, where (and by whom) within political parties are the decisions taken about which candidates are nominated for the winnable seats?

Opportunities for women to pursue political careers—and in particular, their chances of being included in candidate lists—are inextricably linked with the nature of candidate-selection processes in individual countries and parties and whether the relevant rules and procedures are transparent, clear and formalized; whether the selection process is inclusive or exclusive; and whether it is decided through a formal or informal/non-institutionalized process. Some studies suggest that clear and defined candidate-selection processes benefit women, as they promote accessibility and awareness of the rules and procedures involved (Caul 1999) and provide opportunities for scrutiny and debate (Matland 2005b), while others suggest that informal and less institutionalized practices may be more friendly to women and susceptible to quicker and easier change due to lobbying by women’s groups (Htun 2002). Yet the important caveat is that while sometimes possible, such achievements may not be sustainable over time, and may be easily reversed (Lovenduski and Norris 1993). In an International IDEA study on women and candidate-selection processes in nine Latin American countries, no significant difference was found between the percentage of female candidates nominated by parties with formal rules for candidate selection, and percentage of female candidates nominated by parties with no such formal rules (International IDEA 2011). This debate suggests that there is no single pattern with regard to candidate-selection processes and their outcome for women, and that more detailed and individualized studies of political party processes are needed to identify measures that promote gender equality in this area. Important factors are informal norms involved in the selection process,
perceptions of women as politicians and the political will to change women’s historical under-representation through, among others, the use of candidate quotas.

**Electoral systems and women’s representation**

An electoral system is broadly defined as the manner in which votes are translated into seats. Three key elements of any electoral system are: 15 **district magnitude** (the number of representatives elected in one electoral district); **the electoral formula** by which the winner of a seat is chosen; and **the ballot structure**, which determines whether the voter votes for a candidate or a party, and whether the voter makes a single choice or expresses a series of preferences. There are three main electoral system families, classified according to how they translate votes into seats (**plurality/majority, mixed and proportional systems**) and a fourth family, into which individual systems that do not fit in the three main families are grouped. There are 12 individual electoral systems identified within these main families.

**Figure 3: Electoral system families**

Electoral system families

![Electoral System Families Diagram](image_url)

*Source: International IDEA 2005.*

*Notes: FPTP = first-past-the-post; TRS = two-round system; AV = alternative vote; BV = block vote; PBV = party block vote; MMP = mixed-member proportional; PR = proportional representation; STV = single transferable vote; SNTV = single non-transferable vote; LV = limited vote; BC = Borda count.*

**Plurality/majority systems** are based on the principle that the candidate or party with a plurality of votes (i.e., more than any other) or a majority of votes (i.e., 50 per cent plus one—an absolute majority) is declared the winner. Such a system may use single-member districts (e.g., FPTP, alternative vote or the two-round system) or multi-member districts (e.g., block vote or party block vote).

**Proportional representation (PR)** is the electoral system family based on the principle of translating the overall votes of a party or grouping into a corresponding proportion of seats in an elected body. For example, a party that wins 30 per cent of the votes will receive approximately 30 per cent of the seats. All PR systems require the use of multi-member districts. There are two major types of PR systems: list PR and single transferable vote (STV).

In a **mixed system**, voters’ choices are used to elect representatives using two different systems: one PR and one plurality/majority. There are two kinds of mixed systems: parallel
Three types of individual electoral systems—single non-transferable vote (SNTV), limited vote (LV) and Borda count (BC)—form part of a fourth electoral system family, in which the SNTV system is a multi-member-district system in which voters can cast one vote for one candidate. LV is similar to the SNTV system, but voters have more than one vote (but less than the total number of candidates, as in the block vote system).

In brief, systems with large district magnitudes (those using multi-member districts) give parties the ability to present a more balanced list of candidates, in which women and men need not compete for a single post in the nomination process within a party. Parties are thus less concerned about a potential male bias among voters, which often leads them to nominate a male candidate over a female one in single-member districts, often referring to him as the ‘most broadly acceptable candidate’.

Box 1: District and party magnitude effects in Tunisia

The radical 50-50 per cent quota system with alternation of women and men throughout the list, which applied to the first Tunisian election following the country’s democratic uprising in 2011, resulted in only 26 per cent women being elected - a disappointment compared to the 28 per cent in the last election under the regime of former President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. This result was due to the fact that more than 80 parties participated in the election, and with rather small district magnitudes, most parties got only one seat per district. With only 7 per cent of the lists headed by women, most of the new women MPs were elected through the biggest party, the Ennahdha Party.

If an electoral formula is conducive to more parties winning seats in the legislature and leads to fewer wasted votes, as can happen in plurality/majority systems, parties will have greater incentives to present more diverse and balanced lists to the electorate, which will lead to the inclusion of more women on candidate lists. The ballot structure can be either party-centred (closed-list PR systems) or candidate-centred (FPTP systems); in party-centred systems, voters vote for a party—giving parties a greater incentive to put forward an inclusive and balanced list.

Open or closed candidate lists (used in list PR systems) also have an important effect on women’s electability. Closed lists allow voters to only vote for a party; they cannot alter the sequence in which candidates will be elected to parliament. Open lists let voters select a party as well as one or more candidates within that party; therefore they help determine which individual party candidates will be elected. Closed lists, particularly if used in conjunction with candidate quotas, produce results that are consistent with the composition of the winning parties’ candidate lists, while open lists have often produced disappointing results for the representation of women in countries in which the public’s acceptance of female systems and mixed-member proportional systems. As women’s representation on average is higher in PR systems than in plurality/majority systems, strategically designing a mixed system (for instance, electing half of the members of parliament (MPs) through a PR system and the other half using a plurality/majority system) can be an effective way to increase women’s representation.
political leaders is low. Nevertheless, in some countries open lists have worked for the benefit of women, as was the case in Poland before the introduction of legislated candidate quotas, where voters used the open list system to elect women candidates who were placed in the lower slots of the candidate list.18

Evidence from around the world demonstrates that proportional electoral systems are conducive to the election of more women candidates than majority systems. The total average number of women elected to parliament in 2012 using PR systems was 25 per cent; mixed electoral systems and majority/plurality electoral systems resulted in 18 and 14 per cent of women elected, respectively (IPU 2012). In all countries with proportional electoral systems, women currently hold 24.6 per cent of the seats, while they hold 18.5 per cent of seats in countries that use the plurality/majority electoral system, and 21.5 per cent in countries with a mixed electoral system. Of the 37 countries that have at least 30 per cent female representation in their legislatures, 24 (65 per cent) use list PR systems, six (16 per cent) use mixed systems and five (13 per cent) use plurality/majority systems. In the 73 countries with 15 per cent or less women in parliament, 43 (58 per cent) use plurality/majority systems, 16 (21 per cent) use PR systems and ten (13 per cent) use mixed systems, while two use other specific types and two are in transition. Importantly, PR systems with high district magnitude are not only more conducive to higher numbers of women by design; they are also better suited to incorporating gender quota mechanisms.19 Of the 118 countries and territories that have some kind of quota system (including those with voluntary party quotas), 64 use PR systems, while 23 use mixed systems and 24 use majority/plurality systems. In addition, two countries use systems falling within the ‘other’ category, three counties have transitional systems and two countries have no provisions for direct elections.

**Key quota types and main features**

As outlined above, gender quotas for elections come in different forms, as do the political and electoral systems in which they are implemented. In order to make gender quotas as effective and meaningful as possible, the design of a gender quota system must be tailored to the country’s political and electoral systems.

**Box 2: Countries with legislated candidate quotas in which a strict alternation between female and male candidates at national and/or sub-national levels is required by law**

Bolivia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, France, Kenya, the Republic of Korea, Lesotho, Libya, Nicaragua, Senegal, Tunisia and Zimbabwe.

**Legislated candidate quotas**

Legislated candidate quotas, provided through constitutions and/or electoral/party laws, require that a minimum number of candidates are women (or of the under-represented sex). This type of quota is usually a binding form of candidate quota for all parties that intend to contest parliamentary seats. Legislated candidate quotas give the state the opportunity
to enforce sanctions to compel political parties to abide by the adopted standard. Around the world, 60 countries and territories currently use legislated candidate quotas for the composition of lower and/or upper houses of parliament, and/or sub-national councils. The ranking order and placement of female candidates in winnable seats in closed list PR electoral systems greatly influences the effectiveness of legislated candidate quotas in ensuring the election of female candidates. Currently, 12 countries and territories with legislated candidate quotas require a strict alternation between female and male candidates on candidate lists for at least one level/house within the legislature (known as zipper or zebra systems), 12 require a ranking order such as ‘one woman in every three candidates’ or a standard close to this level, while the remaining countries have either a very weak ranking requirement such as ‘one in every five candidates to be a woman’ or have no ranking order requirements at all. Quota rules that include strict alternation or a condition such as ‘one woman in every three candidates’ require parties to field a large number of female candidates across their entire list—not just place them at the bottom. However, such a rule is only effective if the candidate lists are closed/blockaded.

Of the 60 countries and territories that have legislated candidate quotas, 34 countries (57 per cent) stipulate sanctions for non-compliance in the form of rejecting the entire list or refusing to register the section/candidates on the list that conflict with the provisions of the law; only eight countries (13 per cent) provide for a financial sanction. Various types of sanctions will be presented in more detail below.
Figure 4: Countries and territories with legislated candidate quotas in the lower or upper house of parliament or at sub-national levels

Americas: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guyana, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay.

Europe: Albania, Armenia, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, FYR of Macedonia, Montenegro, Poland, Portugal, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain.

Asia and Oceania: Indonesia, Republic of Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Nepal, Timor-Leste, Uzbekistan.


Territories and special areas: Kosovo.


Note: Countries may appear on more than one of the three maps and lists (Figure 4, Figure 5, Figure 6 and Tables A1, A2, A3 and A4) as they may practise different types of quotas within one level or at different levels of governance. Examples of such countries include Kenya, Mauritania, Rwanda and Zimbabwe.

Legislated reserved seats

While legislated and voluntary candidate quotas regulate the minimum number of women or candidates of an under-represented sex to be included on candidate lists, reserved seats stipulate the number of women or representatives of an under-represented sex to be elected to legislative bodies. Reserved seats are the least-used quota type globally, but they are increasingly used in Africa and South-East Asia. To date, 36 countries and territories have adopted the system of reserved seats using three main methods for lower and/or upper houses and/or sub-national level councils:

1. **A special nation-wide tier for female candidates only**: this method takes a number of different forms, for example: (1) the election of a set number of women from districts designed for electing female parliamentarians only (in Rwanda, where women are
elected in 24 provinces through a specially designated electoral college); (2) a separate tier of female MPs directly elected in single-member districts (in Uganda); and (3) a separate tier reserved for women to be elected from a special all-women national lists (such as the 60 reserved seats for women in Morocco elected through a women-only list PR system/closed list and in Mauritania, which elects 20 women through a women-only nationwide list).

2. **Certain constituencies reserved for women only**: this method ensures that these districts will return only female candidates. It is used at the sub-national level in India by rotating reserved wards from one electoral cycle to another, in order to avoid eliminating male candidates from the contest in a given district/ward for a long period of time.

3. The **‘best loser system’** reserves seats for women who garnered the most votes in their districts (compared to other women) but did not win. In Jordan, for example, for the allocation of the 15 reserved seats for women, the election commission will calculate the percentage of votes for unsuccessful women candidates in district elections by dividing the number of votes they obtain by the total number of votes cast in their constituency. The 15 women candidates who obtain the highest percentage of votes nationwide will be declared elected on the condition that no governorate obtains more than one reserved seat for women.

Certain countries reserve a fixed number of seats for women—such as Tanzania, where 30 per cent of seats are reserved for women—but do not require these candidates to be publicly elected, and instead allocate the special seats for women among winning parties in proportion to the number of seats awarded to them in Parliament. Lists of women who will eventually take up these mandates are submitted to the election management body in advance of the elections, and the methods parties use to select these candidates are diverse, from internal party elections to appointments. A similar system is used in Zimbabwe and in Pakistan to designate women members to reserved seats in the lower house, and in Lesotho’s sub-national elections.

A review of experiences in the use and impact of reserved seats suggest that reserved seat quotas must be designed to give women ‘elected legitimacy’—i.e., reserved seats should be subject to competitive election among several female candidates, where the elected women have their own power base/constituency.
Figure 5: Countries and territories with reserved seats in the lower or upper house of parliament or at sub-national levels

America: Haiti

Asia and Oceania: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China, India, Pakistan, Philippines, Samoa, Timor-Leste, Vanuatu.

Africa and Middle East: Algeria, Burundi, Djibouti, Eritrea, Guinea, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Lesotho, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Palestine, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zimbabwe.

Territories and Special Areas: Kosovo, Taiwan (Chinese Taipei).


Note: Countries and territories may appear on more than one of the three maps and lists (Figure 4, Figure 5, Figure 6 and Tables A1, A2, A3 and A4) as they may practise different types of quotas within one level or at different levels of governance. Examples of such countries include Kenya, Mauritania, Rwanda and Zimbabwe.

Voluntary party quotas

Voluntary party quotas have been increasingly popular among left and centre-left parties such as Green, Socialist and Social Democratic parties (Dahlerup 2006; Norris and Krook 2011) in many countries in Europe. In Sweden, many political parties introduced voluntary party quotas in the form of a ‘neither sex should be represented by less than 40 per cent’ rule in 1970s and 1980s, as a result of which the number of women MPs reached 39 per cent in the 1988 elections. It was only after the 1991 elections (when women’s numbers in parliament dropped to 34 per cent) that women in various parties demanded stricter measures, such as alternating between male and female candidates across candidate lists, in order to secure true parity among elected representatives. Voluntary party quotas contributed to significant advances in the representation of women in national parliaments in countries as diverse as Australia, Germany, Mozambique, Namibia, Nicaragua, South Africa and the United Kingdom. As noted above, in about 37 countries and territories one or more parties use voluntary party quotas.
Any political party can introduce gender quotas for their own lists for public elections. One or two parties can be forerunners for other parties in a country. In many countries, gender quotas were first introduced by individual political parties, and were later adopted by parliaments with binding quota regulations for all political parties.

Voluntary party quotas applied to candidate lists should be complemented by ranking-order provisions in order to ensure that women are included in leading positions of the candidate lists and evenly distributed across the entire list of candidates. Ranking-order specifications will be presented in more detail below.

Voluntary quotas are likely to be respected and properly implemented in parties with clear rules, a bureaucratic culture and standardized practices (Lovenduski and Norris 1993). Hence, highly institutionalized parties may provide a more conducive environment for adopting and implementing voluntary party quotas.

**Figure 6. Countries with voluntary gender quotas for the lower house, upper house or sub-national levels**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Americas:</th>
<th>Canada, Chile, Guatemala.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Europe:</td>
<td>Austria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Switzerland, Slovakia, Sweden, Turkey, United Kingdom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia and Oceania:</td>
<td>Australia, Philippines, Thailand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa and Middle East:</td>
<td>Botswana, Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Israel, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source:* Global Database of Quotas for Women <http://www.quotaproject.org>

*Note:* This list includes countries in which at least one party represented in parliament practices a voluntary gender quota for legislative elections. Countries which have legislated quotas for parliament are not included.
Voluntary quotas may be easier to adopt, as they only require action from within political parties—unlike legislated candidate quotas or reserved seats, the adoption of which may be delayed by lengthy and protracted legislative procedures. Such quotas can be implemented without changing the existing electoral boundaries. However, parties that lack internal discipline and institutionalization will not be able to ensure compliance from within, and voluntary quotas will not have a meaningful impact if parties do not support female candidates with campaign funding and placing them in winnable seats (UNDP 2008).

Advice for quota designers: how to make quotas work?

Gender quotas are usually considered to be meaningful and effective when they: (1) include a specific, measurable numerical target, (2) are accompanied by well-designed quota rules such as ranking-order rules and placement mandates that match the country’s electoral system, ballot structure and list type, and (3) include sanctions for non-compliance.

Design quota provisions to fit the electoral system

Electoral systems and party structures have important implications for how easy it is to apply gender quotas or the difficulties that advocates may encounter when lobbying for their adoption. As noted above, candidate quotas (both legislated and voluntary) are easier to implement in PR systems with large districts than in single-member districts, in which decisions on which candidate (only one candidate per party) to field in each district are much more heavily debated, and parties tend to favour male candidates due to gender-based stereotypes and powerful male incumbents. However, majority/plurality electoral systems based on single-member or multi-member districts have also been successfully combined with candidate quotas, for example in the UK, where the Labour Party has instituted a voluntary system of all-women shortlists (AWS) for selecting candidates nominated in certain districts for parliamentary elections. Under this system, the Labour Party identifies constituencies in which candidates will be selected from women-only shortlists in order to ensure that the party candidates in these contests will be women. For the 2015 elections, the party has decided to select candidates for 50 per cent of its target seats using AWS. Other examples of legislated candidate quotas matched with plurality/majority systems include Senegal, which uses a parallel electoral system in which parties are required to field an equal number of male and female candidates in multi-member districts. Uganda has an additional tier of women-only districts where women are elected directly, and India has districts/wards reserved for women at the sub-national level, where women are directly elected.

Include ranking-order rules and placement mandates in quota rules

In all electoral systems (and with legislated as well as voluntary candidate quotas), the quota provisions should include rules about the gendered rank order. Fair vertical placement of the female and male candidates on the electoral list (PR systems with closed party lists) and/or a horizontal distribution of both sexes in winnable seats is essential if women are to have a real chance of being elected. Rank-order rules are adopted to prevent quota rules (for instance a general rule of 30 or 50 per cent female candidates) from becoming merely symbolic, with only a few women getting elected because political parties have placed most
of the female candidates at the bottom of the lists or in unwinnable constituencies. Many quota systems today combine rules about the total number of women and men on the candidate lists with specific rules concerning the gender composition of the top candidates, which are sometimes labelled ‘double quotas’ in PR systems.

Examples of vertical rank-order rules for the distribution of female and male candidates are:

- zebra or zipper systems: alternating female and male candidates throughout the lists (e.g., Bolivia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, France, Kenya, Republic of Korea, Lesotho, Libya, Nicaragua, Senegal, Tunisia and Zimbabwe); alternation is used by many Green parties as well Social Democratic parties;
- a requirement that the top two candidates are not of the same sex (e.g., Belgium);
- 40:60 ratio for every five posts on the list (e.g., Spain); and
- one out of every group of three candidates must be a woman (e.g., Albania, Argentina, Indonesia, Serbia, Timor-Leste).

Table 1 demonstrates the effects of various rank-order rules for candidate lists by estimating the minimum number of women that will be elected from one party in one electoral district, depending on how many seats the party wins in each district. All examples are based on a list PR system with closed lists. The table only shows the absolute minimum number of women that could be elected under given rules. This table should be read as follows: if the party only wins one seat in the district, none of the four rank-order systems in Columns 2, 3, 4 or 5 will guarantee the election of a female candidate. If the party wins two seats in the district, the zipper system and the rank-order rule in Column 3 will guarantee the election of at least one woman. Under a requirement of 30 per cent female candidates from each party (last column), no women may be elected if they were placed in unwinnable seats or at the bottom of a list with 16 candidates or more.
Table 1: Effect of different ranking systems when the party magnitude varies (for candidate quotas, legislated or voluntary)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of seats won by the party in the district</th>
<th>Minimum number of women elected by type of rank-order rule</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alternation/zipper rule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Top 2 candidates cannot be of same gender + at least 1 woman in every subsequent group of 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>At least 1 of each gender in each group of 3 candidates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30 per cent women among candidates without a rank order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Horizontal rank-order systems.** In plurality/majority systems with single-member districts, in which each party nominates only one candidate, rank-order rules need to be adopted. Requiring the presence of 50 per cent female candidates may result in the election of very few women if these candidates are mostly placed in unwinnable constituencies. The first electoral cycle in France after the introduction of the parity law demonstrates this potential. Political parties were required to field equal numbers of male and female candidates across all single-member electoral districts, which led to an increase of just 1 per cent (from 11 to 12 per cent) of elected women due to the placement of female candidates in unwinnable seats. The determination of winnable seats in single-member districts should be based on the result of the previous election, and female and male candidates should be distributed equally in safe and unsafe constituencies for their party.
Sanctions for non-compliance

The provision of sanctions and their enforcement is the most important way to ensure that gender quotas are effective.

In the case of **legislated quotas**, the presence and enforcement of sanctions greatly increases the likelihood of party compliance. The crucial questions are (1) what sanctions are effective and (2) who should have the responsibility to ensure that sanctions are enforced. Sanctions are usually provided by laws that mandate the use of quotas and electoral management bodies are generally responsible for monitoring compliance and enforcing sanctions against parties found to be in violation of quota rules.

In the case of **voluntary party quotas** adopted by individual parties, the central party organizations monitor whether the local nominating party bodies are following the party’s quota provisions. Some central party organizations are reluctant to interfere with the prerogatives of the local party organizations, and have not adopted any sanctions, such as the German and Swedish Social Democratic parties. But in other cases the central party organization will ask the local party chapter to renominate its list, as is the case in the Norwegian Labour Party. In Ireland, the local party organization has to seek a waiver from the National Executive Committee if female candidates cannot be found. In Croatia, the Social Democratic Party introduced a 40 per cent quota for elections in 1996, and a special supervision board ensured compliance.

The two main types of sanctions for non-compliance are (1) rejection of the list before the election and (2) financial penalties and incentives.

**Rejection of the list.** This sanction is by far the most effective, provided that the electoral management body has the legal mandate to reject non-compliant lists and that the sanctions are enforced in practice. Where the electoral authorities clearly communicate to political parties that their lists will be rejected if they do not comply with all relevant quota regulations (and therefore the party will not be able to participate in the election), the effect has proved to be strong. This type of sanction is used for instance in Poland, Costa Rica, FYR of Macedonia and Belgium (see Annex A/Table A1).

**Box 3: Sanctions for Non-Compliance**

Out of the total number of countries with legislated candidate quotas, 57 per cent (34 out of 60) provide sanction for non-compliance in the form of a rejection of the entire list or rejection of the section/candidates on the list which conflict with the provisions of the law, and only 13 per cent (8 out of 60) provide for a financial sanction for non-compliance.

Sanctions such as rejection of the list are sometimes preceded by an (often public) **warning** to parties that their failure to comply with the quota regulations will result in rejection of the list/deregistration from the electoral contest if the list is not revised. In Spain, a party that does not comply with the quota rules will be given a three-day period following a warning, to be followed by the rejection of the list if non-compliance is not remedied. In Serbia, a list is sent back to remedy the non-compliance. In Bosnia and Herzegovina,
political parties or coalitions have five days to replace the candidates and resubmit them to the Central Election Commission (CEC) for certification. In Mexico, parties that do not comply with quota rules have 48 hours to amend their lists. After this period, if they are still found to be non-compliant, parties will be publicly reprimanded by the General Council of the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) and given an extra 24 hours to rectify their list, after which the IFE will reject non-compliant lists. Such rules, however, have their pitfalls. Since the main goal behind any quota regulation is to change parties’ recruitment patterns and require them to look more seriously for (and empower) female candidates for election, the practice of correcting unbalanced lists at the last minute by asking a female candidate to stand for election may not result in a systemic change in candidate-selection processes. Instead, party officials and committees in charge of candidate-selection processes should strive to identify and nominate women candidates in time for the official submission date of the candidate lists.

In some cases such as Armenia, female candidates elected to parliament have been pressured by their parties to give up their seats to male colleagues shortly after the election. To eliminate this potential, the quota legislation could be changed to require that if a female MP resigns, her substitute must also be female; violations should be punished with sanctions.

**Financial penalties.** Eight countries with legislated candidate quotas penalize non-compliance financially. In Portugal, a list found to violate quota legislation will be made public and punished with a fine, which is calculated according to the level of non-compliance. In France, rejection of the list is used at the local level, while financial penalties are implemented at the national level; this variation in sanctions, together with the effect of different electoral systems, contributed to a remarkably higher representation of women at the local level than at the national level in all elections following the introduction of the parity law. In elections to the National Assembly, the biggest parties chose to pay fines rather than comply with the quota regulation. In Albania, a fixed fine of ALL 1,000,000 (roughly 7,120 EUR per list) is the penalty for non-compliance in the case of parliamentary elections and ALL 50,000 (roughly 357 EUR) in the case of sub-national elections. In Ireland, political parties lose 50 per cent of their state funding unless at least 30 per cent of the nominated candidates are women and at least 30 per cent are men. Overall, financial sanctions pose less of a threat than the rejection of party lists; parties that receive large private contributions can easily absorb fines levied on their public funding due to violating quota regulations.

**Financial incentives** that increase public funding to parties that nominate a set number of female candidates are a relatively recent phenomenon. In Georgia, where a quota bill has been repeatedly turned down, a 2011 provision in the law of political parties stipulated that political parties that include at least 20 per cent candidates of a different sex in each group of ten candidates would receive a 10 per cent bonus from the state budget. However, this system failed to achieve its intended effect, as no major parties that won seats in parliament in 2012 complied with the regulation. The rule has since been amended to increase the additional public funding allocation to 30 per cent for parties that nominate at least 30 per cent candidates of a different sex within every ten candidates. The new provisions will apply to the local government elections planned for 2014. Colombia and Croatia also have financial incentives to encourage political parties to nominate more women.
Transitional contexts

Transitions from one system of governance to another—whether driven by the political calculations of existing regimes, political and governance reforms as part of peace-building and reconstruction processes, or transitions in the wake of democratic uprisings—all represent critical junctures at which fundamental issues of gender-based justice and equality in representation (and the character of intra-party decision-making processes) need to be considered and addressed. Such transitional periods almost always feature constitutional review processes, for example, that introduce amendments to the bill of rights to better guarantee human rights and the non-discrimination of women on equal terms with men; protect and promote the rights of formerly marginalized or minority ethnic, indigenous, religious or other groups (including women); or implement a major overhaul of the political and electoral system with far-reaching implications on party systems, mechanisms for civic engagement, etc. Various actors should increasingly use such democratic openings to lobby for the introduction of stronger equality and non-discrimination provisions in women’s political participation and representation rights, and for the introduction of gender quotas to ensure the de facto implementation of these constitutional principles. This has been the case in many post-conflict and transition countries, albeit in often very different circumstances and political histories (for instance in South Africa and Rwanda, which has resulted in the very high representation of women), as well as in Afghanistan,21 Argentina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, FYR of Macedonia, Iraq, Kyrgyzstan, Serbia, Timor-Leste and, most recently, Libya.