



GENDER IN POLITICAL PARTIES' STRATEGIC PLANS

INTRODUCTION

As of January 2019, the global average for women's representation in parliaments was 24 per cent; only three countries (Bolivia, Rwanda and Cuba) had 50 per cent or more women in their national parliaments, and 29 parliaments had less than 10 per cent women (UN Women 2019). Political parties are consistently identified as responsible for women's underrepresentation, given their role as the main 'gatekeepers' of elected decision-making positions in most countries (International IDEA 2016). This is because intraparty democracy has a significant bearing on women's and men's opportunities and ability to access positions and spaces of power and decision-making. This is true both within parties and for elected political positions at the national level. Whereas political party statutes set out broad principles, values, rules, and procedures for institutional decision-making and practices, strategic plans articulate how, when, by whom and using what mechanisms the party will achieve those goals.

This factsheet illustrates the intrinsic link of gender in political parties' programmes and operational policies, processes and practices/functions. It draws on three International IDEA knowledge resources — *Strategic Planning Tool for Political Parties: A Practical Guide*, *A Framework for Developing Gender Policies for Political Parties* and *Political Parties in Africa through A Gender Lens*. It highlights the approach for institutionalizing gender equality in the conceptualization, development and implementation of a party's strategic plan. The need to create such a document was identified during interventions on strategic planning for political parties and gender equality in intraparty democracy processes in countries such as Haiti, Kenya, Namibia and Nepal over the past few years.



International IDEA



Political Parties in Africa through A Gender Lens



The content of the fact sheet draws on three publications: (i) the 'Strategic Planning Tool for Political Parties: A Practical Guide' (a joint publication with the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy-NIMD); (ii) 'Framework for Developing Gender Policies for Political Parties' and (iii) 'Political Parties in Africa through A Gender Lens'.

Political parties' commitment to promoting gender equality can be demonstrated by articulating the norms and objectives of gender equality in key documents such as strategic plans.

WHY GENDER MAINSTREAMING WITHIN POLITICAL PARTIES?

It is widely acknowledged that the failure to include women and gender perspectives in political decision-making weakens the legitimacy of democratic institutions and processes (International IDEA 2016). Achieving gender equality in political parties and other institutions of political participation and representation is central to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SDG5 aims to achieve 'gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls' by 2030; one of its indicators is that women should have full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life in all countries. SDG16 aims to achieve 'effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels' (United Nations 2015). To effectively contribute to the attainment of these and other SDGs, political parties need to improve their internal structures, processes and practices.

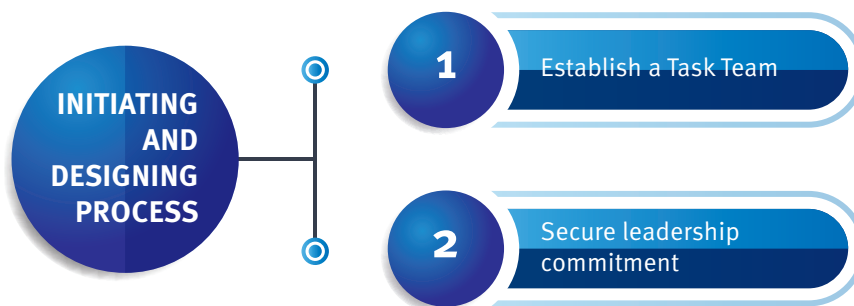
Political parties' commitment to promoting gender equality can be demonstrated by articulating the norms and objectives of gender equality in key documents such as strategic plans. As a major first step, this creates and nurtures an enabling environment that influences the systems, processes, practices and culture within parties. Institutionalizing a gender equality perspective in the conceptualization and development of a political party's strategic plan is crucial in order to, among other things:

- systematize the identification and awareness of gender inequalities and gaps within the party;
- catalyse the adoption of measures to address these inequalities and gaps;
- institutionalize gender equality as an integral goal for the party's vision and practices;
- define strategies and accountability mechanisms to address gender inequality in all party operations and programmes; and
- enhance a party's capacity to aggregate societal interests and the needs of both women and men.

Though political parties around the world have made some positive efforts to promote and implement gender equality measures, most remain reluctant or unsure about how to systematically 'undertake internal reforms to further substantive equality between women and men' (International IDEA 2016: 15).

DEVELOPING A GENDER-RESPONSIVE STRATEGIC PLAN FOR A POLITICAL PARTY

Initiating and designing process



When selecting working group members, the party leadership should seek to balance optimal decision-making capacities on the one hand, and optimal representativeness and inclusivity on the other.

It is not possible (or desirable) for every party leader, staffer and ordinary member to get involved in the day-to-day practicalities related to drafting, gathering inputs and adopting a party’s strategic plan. An inclusive task team or working group should be established and given a mandate to assess institutional readiness and lead the process of conceptualizing, drafting, gathering inputs and validating the processes associated with developing the strategic plan. When selecting working group members, the party leadership should seek to balance optimal decision-making capacities on the one hand, and optimal representativeness and inclusivity on the other (Caspar F. Van Den Berg et al. 2013: 28).

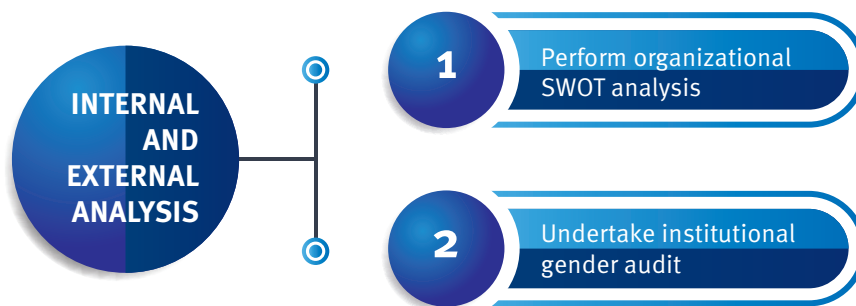
Optimal decision-making capacity requires that some team members should be high ranking enough, and have strong institutional knowledge and authority, to offer strategic guidance and make decisions. For instance, the working group could include at least one member of the party’s National Executive Committee, since they will have easy access to (and influence over) their peers at that level. This will facilitate and expedite senior leadership inputs and validation of the drafts produced by the team. Optimal decision-making capacity also means that the team is lean enough to allow for effective dialogue and decision-making.

Optimal representativeness, however, requires that the group reflect a cross-section of the party membership—particularly the equitable representation of women and men, youth and thematic expertise. It is highly unlikely that a team constituted of only (or predominantly) one gender will produce a gender-responsive strategic plan. A conscious effort should be made to ensure a good balance of perspectives and expertise within the team, which may be complemented with external input, if needed.

Political parties’ strategic planning process in Kenya

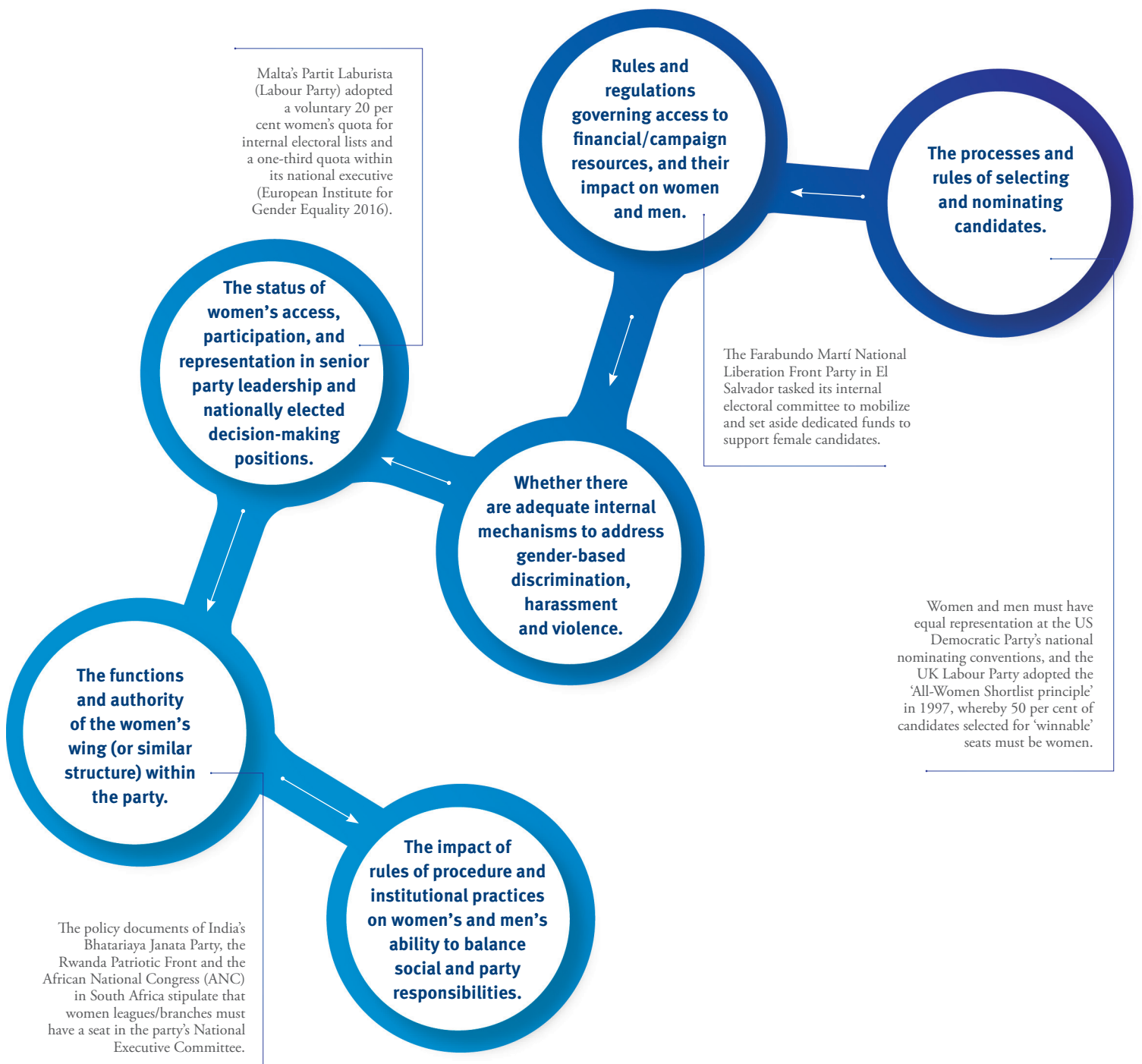
During the strategic planning process undertaken by nine parliamentary parties in Kenya in 2013–14, each party established a nine-member working group. Representation of women in these working groups ranged from 40–48 per cent, and each party tried to balance seniority and thematic expertise within the group by including members of its National Executive Committee, at least one-party representative from parliament, a member of the manifesto committee, and representatives of the women’s and youth leagues. Eight political parties in Haiti applied a similar principle when they undertook a comparable process in 2016–17.

Internal and external analysis



Although a preliminary analysis of the party’s Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) will have been undertaken in the previous phase, it is deepened at this stage. The party must also determine which institutional challenges or opportunities are strategic or operational in nature, because this will guide the team’s formulation of strategies and an action plan. The strengths and weaknesses in the SWOT framework refer to the party’s internal environment, over which it has a high degree of influence. The opportunities and threats are related to its external environment, over which it usually has only limited (or no) influence. Using the framework helps a party direct its attention to where it can have a meaningful impact. It also helps the party identify and take into account any institutional limitations (e.g. human or financial resources, socio-political environment, etc.) in order to adopt a realistic and implementable plan.

A gender audit should be a key ingredient of the SWOT analysis process. A good gender-responsive strategic plan addresses gaps in all areas of a party's internal organization. It also considers how internal practices and operations affect the party's capacity to guarantee gender equality in its external processes, such as in national elections. It is therefore imperative to develop a combination of quantitative and qualitative self-assessment indicators such as the following:



Box 4.1.
Questions to ask when conducting a gender audit of a political party

Who does what?

- Which activities do men and women usually perform?
- Do women undertake certain party activities more than men because they are women?
- Are any positions more predictably assigned to men or women?

Who has more access to training opportunities?

- Does the party provide regular training? On what issues?
- Does training address raising awareness about gender equality?
- Are men and women equal beneficiaries of training opportunities?

Women’s groups and secretariats

- Does the party have a women’s group?
- Is this group part of the party’s decision-making and executive structures?
- Does this group articulate women’s interests and opinions pertaining to the party’s internal and external policies?

Who decides which candidates are nominated—and how?

- How does the party nominate its candidates for elected offices? Are the rules and criteria clear?
- Does the party strive to achieve gender parity among its candidates?
- Do women party members participate in candidate selection committees?

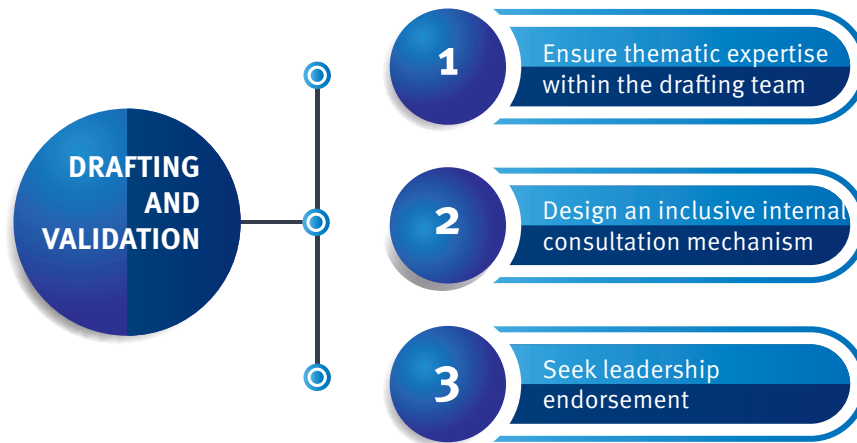
Who gets the highest posts?

- How many men and women are in the party’s National Executive Committee? What roles do women have?
- How many women and men are in the Political Committee? What roles do they have? Who has more access to resources?
- Do women and men have equal access to party finances in general? During electoral campaigns?
- Do women or men have more access to parties’ resources and support (organizational and logistical, political, etc.)?

Party manifestos and programmes

- How does the party develop its manifestos and programmes?
- Is this process open and inclusive of diverse groups from within a party?
- Do women members have effective access to and a voice in this process?

Drafting and validation



The first two phases are designed to lay a firm groundwork and generate the necessary information to formulate policy positions, or institutional strategies, and a concrete action plan. To build broad-based buy-in, the process of identifying and prioritizing such issues requires extensive consultations and gathering input from all relevant party structures, particularly the senior leadership. Thematic expertise within and outside the party (if required) should be engaged to ensure that the proposed actions are in line with the principles and current trends—both in relation to gender and other thematic aspects covered in the strategic plan. At a minimum, a good strategic plan should include the following five elements.

Context

In this section, the current state of the party in general is described; highlighting aspects such as the level of representation in parliament and/or other entities, organization and performance of its internal structures, the state of internal democracy- including in relation to gender equality, party membership and funding. It also provides a brief assessment of the external environment and how it impacts the party's performance. The rationale for developing/reviewing the political party's strategic plan at that point in time is also presented here.

Vision and Mission

A vision statement is a short, aspirational declaration of the future the political party desires for itself and for society. It provides insight into the party's institutional goals and how it plans to accomplish them. It should answer the question 'who and where do

we want to be'? A mission statement on the other hand provides a concise description of the political party's fundamental purpose—why it exists and the value it adds to society. Ideally, all decisions of the political party are guided by its vision; and so, there is no better place to anchor its commitment to gender equality. South Africa's ANC for example, commits to 'reach the objective of full representation of women in all decision-making structures...by implementing a programme of affirmative action...' in its vision statement (ANC Constitution, Rule 6.1).

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT)

This section recaps the key strategic issues identified during the external and internal analysis phase (see page 4). It is critical to reiterate at this stage, gender related issues that were raised as part of SWOT analysis and gender audit discussions. This section is meant to elaborate not only how each of such issues is strategic for the institution, but also highlight the 'cost' of not addressing them.

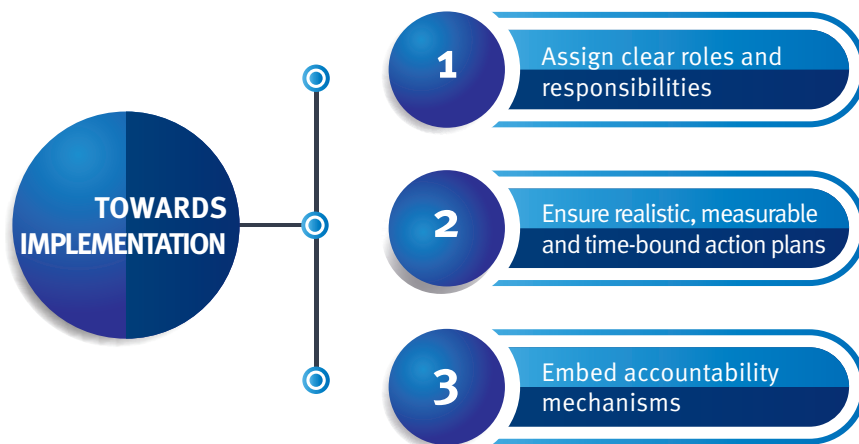
Strategic Goals

This section should provide insight into the results a political party wishes to see, once its strategic plan has been fully implemented. For example, these may include achieving a specific gender ratio in its senior leadership positions by a specified period of time, or demonstrable accountability practices in enforcing gender equality measures and practices within the party. Highlighting gender equality and inclusivity as one of the strategic goals would signal the political party's strong commitment to ensure its realisation. It is important that the plan lays out guidelines for monitoring and evaluating the attainment of the agreed goals.

Stakeholder analysis

Stakeholders are individuals, groups or organizations that can positively or negatively impact the party's capacity to deliver on its stated mandate. They include voters, electoral management bodies, political party assistance providers, internal party structures (such as the women's league), and members with special skills or thematic expertise. Undertaking this analysis as part of a strategic planning process helps the party reflect on whose (individual or organization) input is needed in the formulation or implementation of the plan, and to develop strategies to manage challenges that may arise from engagements with some of the stakeholders (for instance, relationships with other parties, electoral management bodies, etc.).

Towards implementation



Whereas the broad commitments in the rest of document address the what and why of institutional gender equality commitments, the implementation plan must spell out the who, where, when and how to operationalize those intentions.

An implementation plan is, ultimately the instrument that will guide the political party's every day action towards achieving the agreed vision and objectives. Given the degree of detail it requires however, this essential part of a strategic plan is often either hastily/poorly designed, or completely ignored altogether (International IDEA 2013). Unfortunately, this renders the entire strategic planning effort useless.

It is crucial that strategic objectives such as achieving gender parity in party leadership positions or special financing measures for women are broken down into specific, concrete actions or activities with a clear allocation of responsibilities, timeframes and resources. Each agreed activity should be accompanied by indicators of success, clear monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and enforcement and accountability measures in case of non-compliance (International IDEA 2016). A good example of a concrete enforcement measure of a political party's gender equality objectives is the establishment of an internal Prosecutor's Office on Gender Equality by Costa Rica's Citizens' Action Party (PAC) (UNDP and NDI 2012). Whereas the the broad commitments in the rest of document address the what and why of institutional gender equality commitments, the implementation plan must spell out the who, where, when and how to operationalize those intentions.

To ensure broad buy-in, it is important to be as inclusive as possible by gathering inputs from all structures of the party. Seeking validation of the senior leadership on each milestone is particularly key as it will increase the potential for implementation of the strategic plan.

CONCLUSION

Political parties in both established and newer democracies around the world continue to face the critical challenge of ensuring the equal access, participation, and representation of women and men at all levels. This factsheet is a resource for political parties to undertake a process of self-reflection, so they can adopt strategies and benchmarks to achieve real gender equality through strategic planning. The process outlined here helps to build an internal consensus on the party's current state, where it wants to be, and what kind of action agenda is necessary to achieve this desired state across all institutional structures, processes and practices. Finally, the factsheet draws political parties' attention to the fact that 'plans are only good intentions unless they immediately degenerate into hard work' (Peter Drucker).

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