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GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN ELECTIONS BY THE ECOWAS COMMISSION:

An Assessment Report and Action Plan

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GENDER mainstreaming in elections by the ECOWAS commission: an assessment report and action plan

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1. Elections—West Africa
2. Gender mainstreaming—West Africa

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Foreword

This report highlights the many ways in which gender is mainstreamed in the ECOWAS Commission's institutional structure and practices as it relates to promoting democracy and governance through credible elections. Guided by robust regional frameworks, technical and financial support to Member states, the Commission has contributed positively to the conduct of elections in the region through its Fact-Finding Missions, Election Observation Missions and Reporting, and fostering networking amongst Election Management Bodies and many other stakeholders.

However, the findings of the assessment indicate that the mainstreaming of gender within most national institutions like Election Management Bodies and regional ones like the ECOWAS Commission, the ECOWAS Parliament and ECONEC needs to be cultivated to fully embrace the concept of gender- equality. To enhance progress in women's participation in elections in West Africa, the political, electoral, and socio-economic barriers highlighted in this report must be addressed.

The ECOWAS Gender Election Strategic Framework outlines the Ten (10) Strategic thematic areas that should serve as the pillars to interrogate the various issues and challenges underpinning efforts and strategies aimed at addressing barriers to equal participation and representation of men and women in the political arena in West Africa as follows:

01 Gender and Legal Framework for Elections	02 Stakeholder Mobilization and Strategic Partnerships	03 Pre-Elections Gender and Election Capacity Building	04 Civic and Voter Education	05 Gender and Institutional Framework for Elections/Role of ECONEC
06 ECOWAS Election Observation Missions/DEAU	07 Funding Gender and Elections	08 Gender and Electoral Security	09 The Media, Gender and Elections	10 Post-Election Capacity Development for Elected Women

We commend the Researcher/Analyst/Report Writer, ECOWAS & ECONEC Staff and Member states experts for their contribution to the production of the report and the accompanying action plan. We call upon the leadership of the Commission, Member states, and all other stakeholders to use this Report and Action Plan as the basic framework to promote accountability to women's political participation and representation in West Africa. At this junction, the ECOWAS Commission wishes to commend the European Union for their steadfast support to their baseline assessment and action plan on Gender and Mediation through the provision made available by the European Union support to ECOWAS regional Peace, Security and Stability mandate programme (ECOWAS-EU PSS Project).

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AAEA	Association of African Election Authorities
AU	African Union
AfRO	Africa Regional Office – Open Society Foundation
BRIDGE	Building Resources in Democracy, Governance & Election
CEI	Commission Electorate Indépendante
CENI	Commission Electorate Nationale Indépendante
CNE	Comissão Nacional Eleitoral
COFFIG	Coalition of Girls and Women of Guinea
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
EAD	Electoral Assistance Division of ECOWAS
ECOFEPA	ECOWAS Female Parliamentarians
ECONEC	ECOWAS Network of Electoral Commissions
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EMBs	Election Management Bodies
EOM	Election Observation Mission
ESR	Election Situation Room
EU	European Union
FCT	Federal Capital Territory (of Nigeria)
FFM	Fact-finding Mission
FOSEP	La Force de Sécurité Elections Présidentielles
G-CSOs	Gender-focused Civil Society Organizations
GESF	ECOWAS Gender and Election Strategic Framework
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GmbH)
INEC	Independent National Electoral Commission, Nigeria
IPU	Inter- Parliamentary Union
LTEOs	Long-Term Election Observers
KAIPTC	Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre
LTEOM	Long-Term Election Observation Mission
LTOs	Long-Term Observers
NEC	National Election Commission
NPF	Nigeria Police Force

OSIWA	Open Society Initiative for West Africa
PAPS	Political Affairs, Peace and Security Department, ECOWAS Commission
PWDs	Persons Living with Disability
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
STEOs	Short-Term Election Observers
STEOM	Short-Term Election Observation Mission
STOs	Short-Term Observers
UNDP	The United Nations Development Program
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
WANEP	West Africa Network for Peace building
WSR	Women's Situation Room

Executive Summary

Culture within most national institutions like Election Management Bodies and regional ones like the ECOWAS Commission, the ECOWAS Parliament and ECONEC needs to be cultivated to fully embrace the concept of gender-equality. The absence of an institutional gender policy and gender focus persons in departments within the ECOWAS Commission and in national and regional electoral structures means that there is limited stimulus for accountability for gender-mainstreaming in programme design and implementation. The political will to translate commitment to enact and respect election-related gender equality legislation in most countries in the region is weak. The paucity of integrating gender in election in West Africa is glaring as the relevance of political rights of women being often reduced to a dot point in election observer reports. ECOWAS Commission would require increased strategic, operational and management capacities to generate and demand accountability in integrating gender in a key peace and security result area such as elections. This assessment report and action plan proposes key activities if implemented by stakeholders can transform women's representation and participation in elections in West Africa.



1.0 **Introduction**

1.0 Introduction

Women's rights are human rights. Political participation and representation of men and women is a human right. Gender equality and women's empowerment are essential components of human development, peace and security, and the bedrock of democracy. UNSCR 1325 acknowledges the disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women and girls. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 on Gender Equality aims to achieve gender equality and to empower all women and girls. Development, governance, and elections share a common concept called gender. Elections are the indispensable root of democracy. They are now almost universal.[1] Though elections do not necessarily make democracy, "democracies without credible elections are no democracies at all". Women constitute about 50% of the population of West Africa and countries in the region with elections without free and equal participation of women are arguably not yet democracies.

Gender is the distinguishing role expected of men and women in our society. These roles are not static and there is potential for equality in the dynamics of the opportunity for both men and women when conscious efforts are made by international, regional, and national organizations working together to ensure that there is a level playing field for all in the democracy, governance, and election pane.

"Gender is defined as the social meaning given to biological sex differences. It is an ideological and cultural construct but is also reproduced within the realm of material practices. It affects the distribution of resources, wealth, work, decision-making and political power, and enjoyment of rights and entitlements within the family as well as public life. Despite variations across cultures and over time, gender relations throughout the world entail asymmetry of power between men and women as a pervasive trait. Thus, gender is a social stratifier, and in this sense, it is similar to other stratifiers such as race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, and age. It helps us understand the social construction of gender identities and the unequal structure of power that underlies the relationship between the sexes".

1999 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development, United Nations, New York, 199, page ix

[1] Kofi A. Annan, Chair of the Global Commission on Elections, Democracy, and Security in Deepening Democracy: A Strategy for Improving the Integrity of Elections Worldwide 2012: 3, 'Foreword' by Kofi A. Annan

The enormity of the task of achieving gender equality requires building and strengthening partnerships among countries and institutions. The ECOWAS Commission has over the years, nurtured relations with several institutions such as the ECONEC, GIZ, WANEP, the KAIPTC, etc. in support of democratization efforts and electoral process in its Member states.

1.1 Focus and Objectives of the Baseline Assessment

The focus of this assignment is on the institutional analysis of the ECOWAS Commission, related national structures, institutions, and stakeholders which will serve as a baseline assessment to facilitate ECOWAS efforts in acquiring increased strategic, operational, and management capacities; increase ECOWAS accountability to integrate gender in a key Peace Security and Stability results area of elections. The assessment indicates approaches to gender mainstreaming in election; proposals for enhancing gender mainstreaming; an action plan of gender mainstreaming; and a framework to monitor and evaluate the implementation of gender mainstreaming in elections assistance by the ECOWAS Commission.

This assessment seeks to highlight and understand the gender dimensions of activities of the ECOWAS Electoral Assistance Division (EAD), electoral institutions at the regional (ECONEC) and national levels Election Management Bodies (EMBs) as well as political parties. The assessment:



Identifies institutional change priorities and capacity building needs towards integrating gender dimensions to electoral processes and systems at the regional and national levels;



Introduces a gender monitoring and evaluation mechanism to increase the consistency in the implementation of the Action Plan of the ECOWAS Gender and Elections Strategic Framework (GESF).



Seeks to highlight lessons learned and best practices relating to mainstreaming of gender in elections in the region and in particular, the process of electoral assistance;

This assessment analysed approaches to gender mainstreaming including gender auditing the Electoral Assistance Division (EAD) and the ECONEC; identified gaps, made recommendations, and developed an action plan to address the identified gaps.

1.2 Methodology of the Assessment

This baseline assessment document analyses gender dimension of ECOWAS Election Observation Missions (EOMs), joint activities with the ECOWAS Network of Electoral Commissions (ECONEC), and collaboration with institutions. Documents that also served as basis for the analysis include the following:

- A Decade of ECOWAS Electoral Assistance in West Africa, 2006-2016
- Statutes of the ECOWAS Network of Electoral Commissions
- ECOWAS Long Term Observation Mission to Nigeria (January 30- February10, 2015)
- ECOWAS Long-Term Election Observation Mission to Togo(April 6 – May5, 2015)
- ECOWAS Election Observation Mission to the Republic of Guinea: Presidential Election (October 11, 2015)
- ECOWAS International Workshop on Ten years of Electoral Experiences and Promotion of Democracy & 2017 Biennial General Assembly Meeting of the ECOWAS Network of Electoral Commissions (ECONEC)
- Final Report of ECOWAS Election Observation Mission (EOM) to the General Elections in Burkina Faso, (November 29, 2015)
- Final Mission Report - ECOWAS Long Term Election Observation Mission to Cote D'Ivoire, (October 11 - November 9, 2015)
- ECOWAS Election Observation Mission (EOM) to the Presidential Elections in the Republic of Benin (March 6 & 20, 2016)
- Final Report Long-Term Electoral Observation Mission from ECOWAS to Cape Verde (September 10 - October 10, 2016)
- The Cotonou Declaration on Electoral Processes in ECOWAS Region,(March 2017)
- ECOWAS Long Term Election Observation Mission to the 2017 Presidential and Representatives Elections in Liberia(September 10 - October 10, 2016)
- The Strategic Plans of the INEC Nigeria (2012 – 2016) and the Electoral Commission of Ghana (2016 – 2020), the two EMBs in West Africa known to have Gender Departments.

Long-term observer reports were mainly selected for the assessment because the duration of stay provides a better opportunity to observe more electoral issues and to make analysis from a gender perspective. Short-term observer reports hardly provide a gender breakdown of the composition of the EOM.

The ECOWAS Department of Political Affairs Peace &Security provided data; while the Head of the Gender Division of INEC, Nigeria, provided very useful insight into the case study of INEC. Personal knowledge of the Author of this report covers a large part of the analysis of the character of ECOWAS gender mainstreaming in election assistance initiatives.

1.3 An Overview of the Gender and Election Landscape in West Africa

The challenges to women's political participation and representation are multi-faceted and multi-layered. These challenges have political, socio-cultural, and economic dimensions. Issues concerning women's political participation and representation in West Africa border on the absence of, or disregard of the existing general legal framework to guide structures and processes especially within EMBs and political parties. For instance, according to an ECOWAS EOM report, in Liberia, despite the existence of the non-discriminatory clause, over 90% of political parties failed to meet the 30% threshold for a particular gender in political representation, as set by Section 4.5 of the Amended Elections Law of 2014.

A system of male domination in socio-cultural decision-making in West Africa shapes women's involvement in politics and creates a real atmosphere of intimidation and instills a sense of fear in women and thereby dampens their desire to venture as candidates for election. Socio-economic status also plays a role in affording people access to strategic positions of decision-making. Women lack access to state funding for elections in most West African countries. Historically, women in the region have been given very few opportunities to rise to head election management bodies (This issue will be illustrated later in the gender audit of the ECONEC). In some cases, low voter registration and voter turnout were largely due to the thousands of women

who could not meet the documentation requirements in a voter registration process.

The average percentage of women in legislature around the world, according to the IPU, as of September 2018, is 23.8%[2] and the regional averages indicate that the Nordic countries top the list with 41.4% with Sub-Saharan Africa below the global average with 23.7%. According to the 2019 data produced by the Inter-Parliamentary Union on the representation of women in parliaments or national assemblies in West Africa, Senegal is the country with the highest number of female representatives - 41.82%. Nigeria with the highest number of representatives in the legislative body - 355 - had just 3.38% women in 2019, compared to 6.5% elected in 2015. West Africa's average of women's representation in the legislature - at the time of data analysis is 14.4%. It is below the sub-Saharan African and global averages of 23.7% and 24.3% respectively. Both are still below the 30% target often used by affirmative action policies. The three Countries that have passed the gender parity laws in West Africa and their global ranking are presented in Table 1 below.

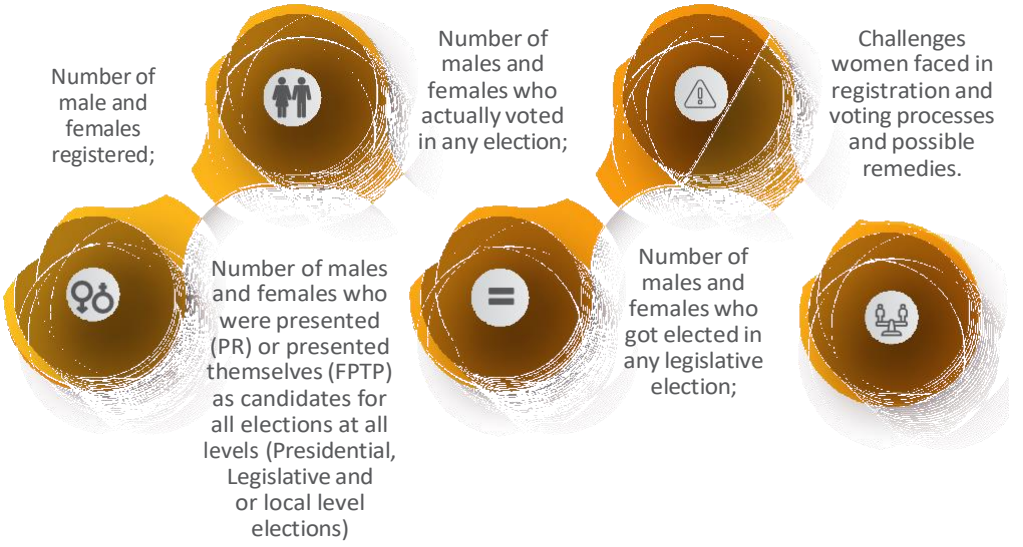
1.4 Success Story: Elections

Table 1: Gender Parity in Senegal, Cape Verde and Guinea (2019)

Global Rank					% Women
15	Senegal	07.2017	165	69	41.82%
77	Cape Verde	03.2016	72	17	23.61%
83	Guinea	09.2013	114	26	22.81%

Statistics is vital information for policy formulation. One of the main challenges of assessing the state of women's participation in election is seldom or no publication of the available data on women's participation in electoral processes such as;

[2] http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm (11 Sept 2018)



Apart from number of males/females registered, which is sometimes made available to the public upon demand, no EMB in West Africa has fully provided the statistics indicated above on its website, though every EMB has all the data but not the will to disaggregate them for all elections.



2.0 The ECOWAS Electoral Assistance Division (EAD) - Gender and Election

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2 .1 Defining Electoral Assistance within ECOWAS

The ECOWAS EAD was created in 2006, at a period where gender was not part of ECOWAS's definition of the concept of credible elections. The preoccupation at that moment was rather the need to promote peace and political stability in the West African region. By extension, the conceptualization of the EAD has since been mainly involved in election observation and when resources are available it conducts election capacity building, direct technical and provides financial[3] and logistical assistance.

The modus operandi of ECOWAS EOMs takes the form of a fact-finding mission, sometimes jointly with ECONEC to assess the institutional and legal framework under which an election would be organized and thus serve as the basis for any preventive diplomacy and mediation efforts; then the deployment of a Long Term Election Observation Mission (LTEOM) to observe the most critical stages of the electoral process to identify and rapidly recommend corrective measures for any issues that could derail the process; and the deployment of a Short Term Election Observer Mission (STEOM).

ECOWAS EAD technical capacity building sometimes involve BRIDGE - Building Resources in Democracy Governance and Elections training for EMBs, back-channel mediation training for Civil Society Organizations; training for Media professionals on responsible election reporting; Gender and Election training workshop to encourage the political participation of women. EAD provided election financial support to the Governments of Liberia, Sierra Leone,Guinea Bissau, among others.

[3] For instance, ECOWAS provided about half a billion F CFA financial support to the EMB of Burkina Faso in 2015.

2.2 ECOWAS Long Term Election Observation and Gender

According to the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and Code of Conduct for International Election Observers (2005), international election observation examines conditions relating to the right to vote and to be elected, including, among other things, discrimination or other obstacles that hinder participation in electoral processes based on political or other opinions, gender, race, color, ethnicity, language, religion, national or social origin, property, birth, or other status, such as physical disabilities. The Declaration also recognizes the importance of balanced gender diversity in the composition of participants and leadership of international election observation missions.

ECOWAS EAD with the support of the German Agency for International Cooperation, Deutsche Gesellschaft füŕr Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ), imbibed the concept of Long-term Election Observation (LTEO) in 2014 to complement its short-term missions. According to ECOWAS report, [4] LTEOMs allow observers more time for a detailed and comprehensive assessment of various stages in the electoral process, helping to better identify and nip potential election-related conflicts in the bud. The objective suggests that the focus for the advent of LTOs in elections by ECOWAS was conflict prevention and collaborates with Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Center (KAIPTC) to train election observers. The LTEOMs have also been complemented by early warning initiatives particularly through the West Africa Network for Peace-building (WANEP), which provides regular analysis and almost real-time monitoring of the political, social, and economic environment.

A few of the ECOWAS LTEOMs from 2015 to 2018 provide an overview of the character of gender mainstreaming in the electoral landscape, what further opportunities the mission provided that were missed:

[4] A Decade of ECOWAS Electoral Assistance in West Africa, 2006-2016

Table 2: An Overview of the Character of Gender Mainstreaming in Elections		
Country / Initiative	**Gender-focus**	**Missed opportunity**
Cote d'Ivoire: ECOWAS LTEOM to the 2015 Presidential Election	Twelve (12) LTOs deployed included gender expert. Gender-balanced composition, with 6 women and 6 men.	Could have institutionalized the notion of a gender-balanced team and update and enhance the LTO reporting framework to include more issues (i.e. challenges and prospects) for women's political participation and representation.
Guinea: ECOWAS LTEOM 2015 Presidential Election	Twelve (12) LTOs deployed included a gender expert; Three (3) females and 9 males experts deployed; Focus was on voter register gender disaggregated data and undesirable effect of nomination fees on potential female candidates.	A 34-page EOM report, the issue on gender was a half-page; Could have focused on, inter alia, gender issues within political party, candidates' campaign, media & voter education; Could also advocate for setting up of Gender unit within the CENI and statistical data on women's participation in voting published by CENI
Cape Verde: ECOWAS LTEOM 2016 Presidential Election	Three (3) females out of Ten (10) LTOs deployed included gender expert; EMB provided statistical data on women's participation.	Need to showcase the Cape Verdean EMB experience on availability of statistics on women's participation.
Liberia: ECOWAS LTEOM 2017 Presidential Elections	Four (4) females of out 16 LTOs; Focus was ensuring credible voters register and peaceful polls; Great effort by NEC to enhance participation of women.	May include whether or not if the registration process enhanced the electoral rights of women, did not gain space in the mission report; No statistical data on women who voted.
Mali: ECOWAS LTEOM 2018 Presidential Elections	Only 6 out of 21 LTOs were women; Declaration made no mention of women in the election. The Preliminary Declaration was more about issue of stability and security in the country.	How the insecurity in certain areas of the country like Gao, Mopti, and Tombouctou, obviously would have major consequences for women going out to register and to vote.

2.3 ECOWAS Short Term Election Observation and Gender

This assessment would be incomplete without providing insight into the paucity of gender mainstreaming during ECOWAS STEOMs. ECOWAS usually deploys a team of about a hundred and fifty observers for STEOMs (see table below for details). STEOMs have a two-fold objective, mainly to ensure that international standards of free, fair, and credible elections are adhered to, thereby verifying that the citizens' rights to freely select their leaders are respected; and to ascertain the credibility of the results declared by local electoral management bodies. STOEMs are usually composed of ambassadors accredited to ECOWAS, staff of the ECOWAS Parliament, officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, electoral experts from EMBs as well as representatives of civil society organizations and the media.

A technical team from the ECOWAS Commission supports the missions. The gender breakdown of the composition of the ECOWAS STEOMs is often not considered as vital information to include in the final EOM reports. The issues included in ECOWAS STEOM reports are usually voting procedures; the presence of party representatives, security, national and international observers; the counting process, sometimes the collation of results and preliminary results of the EMB. Below shows a table of the gender breakdown of the composition of ECOWAS STEOMs from 2015 to 2018. It indicates that in the past 4 years (2015 – 2018) ECOWAS has deployed a cumulated total of 1860 STOs to 12 Member States wherein 7 out of 12 missions, the proportion of men out-numbered the women, and cumulatively the mission composed of 47% women and 53% men.

Table 3: Gender Breakdown of the Composition of ECOWAS STEOMs from 2015 to 2018			
Country/Election from 2015 – 2018	**Total Number of Short-Term Observers**	**Number of Women**	**Number of Males**
Guinea-Bissau(2015)	200	86	114
		43%	57%
Nigeria (2015)	350	110	240
		31%	69%
Togo (2015)	80	35	45
		44%	56%
Cote d'Ivoire (2015)	150	65	85
		43%	57%
Burkina Faso (2015)	150	80	70
		53%	47%
Guinea (2015)	150	90	60
		60%	40%
Benin (2016)	150	61	89
		41%	58%
Cape Verde (2016)	80	52	28
		65%	35%
Ghana (2016)	100	45	55
		45%	55%
Liberia (2017)	150	92	58
		61%	39%
Sierra Leone (2018)	150	65	85
		43%	57%
Mali (2018)	150	98	52
		65%	35%
TOTAL	**1860**	**879**	**981**
		47%	**53%**

However, in Guinea (in 2015), Cape Verde (in 2016), Liberia (in 2017) and Mali (in 2018), the composition of women in short term observations was 60% and above, a situation which could be said to be disproportionately high in favour of women to the disadvantage of men.

Almost every ECOWAS EOM reports on the demographics of women to men in a country; the representation of women in the legislature of the country; gender-disaggregated data on voter registration, where available; women candidates; engagement of women as poll staff and political party agents. Some further details of gender reporting in ECOWAS EOM (LTEOM & STEOM) are given in examples below:

Table 4: ECOWAS EOM – Level of Gender Sensitive Reporting and Recommendations

Election	Quantity of Women's issues observed	Extent of Gender related Recommendation
Burkina Faso 2015	Demographics of women; network of women CSO organized Situation Room; and statistic on progress on women's representation.	Need for parties to respect quota for women.
Cote d'Ivoire 2015	Sensitization targeted women; and platform of youth and women created by CSOs.	EMB was urged to have gender policy.
Nigeria 2015	Progress on gender issues observed such as the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) had set up a Gender Unit. The Gender Unit sought the collaboration of the ECOWAS LTEOM in training its staff on gender issues in elections.	Collaboration between ECOWAS LTEOM and the NPF is innovative and should be replicated in other countries of the sub-region.
		"Encourage women participation in politics and leadership". "Apply the quota system in the political parties to enable women occupy positions of responsibility. "
Togo 2015	"Women were not heavily involved at all levels of the electoral process because it was noticed that they were far less stressed than men".	The Togolese authorities must do more for greater involvement and empowerment of women in the electoral process at all levels (FOSEP, INEC / polling station, etc.)

	"No female candidate in the presidential election unlike that of 2010; demonstrating the unwillingness of political parties to promote women, and lack of cooperation and collaboration among the women themselves to support female candidates".	
Guinea 2015	Women significantly underrepresented in political life in general and in EMB; 49% of the registered electorate are women; data on women's participation only available at national level; no department within CENI for gender; more than 50% of domestic observers were women; and more women and youth as poll staff.	Take the necessary legal measures to consolidate democracy for a better representation of women in decision-making bodies; Give more space to gender issues and ensure gender equality. Encourage women and youth to become more involved in the electoral process in a peaceful way.
Benin 2016	Impressive voter turnout of women and the youth.	EMB urged to provide gender-disaggregated data.
Liberia 2017	NEC set up a Gender Election Coordinating Group in all 15 counties; deployment of 219 Gender Mobilizers across the country as well as the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) by the political parties committing to improving the participation of women in the elections; Available gender disaggregated voter registration; EMB ensured gender balance among staff of polling stations.	Legislature urged to pass Affirmative Action Bill that provides for seven seats to be reserved for women, youths, and PWDs; Political parties to make a firm commitment and take necessary steps to enforce affirmative action initiatives in favour of women vying for elective position.
Mali 2018	Preliminary declarations of 1st & 2nd Round did not provide any gender dimension to the electoral process.	No gender related recommendation in all the ECOWAS EOM declarations.

The analyses of gender-sensitive reporting and recommendations of gender reporting in ECOWAS EOM (LTEOM & STEOM) indicate that assessment was not guided by any specific strategic framework, guidelines, and indicators. The information is essentially descriptive and does not allow for sufficient monitoring of the implementation of the recommendations and documenting progress.

A simplistic comparison between ECOWAS and the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) region may afford an opportunity for some lessons to be learned from the African region. In the objectives of the SADC Principles and Guidelines governing elections, among others, it insists on gender balance and equality; ethnic and religious diversity in governance and development; and promote the development of inclusive political institutions; and enhancement of civil and political rights; and economic, social, and cultural rights for the purposes of advancing democracy, prosperity, peace, stability, and security in the region.

Again, learning from the SADC experience, in the selection of individuals to serve as part of SADC EOMs (SEOMs), it emphasizes that members shall generally comprise electoral experts, representatives of EMBs, national governments and legislatures, civil society, and eminent personalities from the Member States, based on the principles of balanced national representation and gender equality. Furthermore, during election observation, SEOMs are expected to observe whether the composition of the EMB reflects the applicable provisions of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, particularly Articles 12 and 13 of the Protocol, which stipulates that State Parties that have ratified the Protocol, shall endeavor, by 2015, to have at least 50 percent of women in decision-making positions, including electoral administration.

2.4 Gender and ECOWAS Election Observation Database

In an effort to generate a pool of potential election observers as well as open up and facilitate the recruitment process of observers, the ECOWAS Commission created an online resource, which could be accessed on http://www.observers.ecowas.int/en/Register_User.aspx

Table 5: Gender and ECOWAS Election Observation Database

Total Potential Observers on database?	188	100%
How many potential observers are women?	77	40.96%
How many potential observers are men?	111	59.04%



An analysis of the ECOWAS Election Observation Database revealed that as of 15 October 2018 @ 12:55 GMT there were 334 applicants (see screen shot) out of which 188 qualified as potential observers where more men were said to be qualified than women.



3.0 ECOWAS Election Capacity Building and Gender

3.0 ECOWAS Election Capacity Building and Gender

Different people and different organizations have different definitions and approaches to the concept of capacity building. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) offers two visions on capacity building, one of which focuses on improving people's capacity to "carry out preordained functions and objectives more effectively, efficiently and sustainably". The EAD has undertaken a few capacity building trainings under its own auspices and in collaboration with the ECOWAS Gender Directorate and other institutions like the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC) and the United Nations Electoral Assistance Division (UNEAD). The level of gender mainstreaming has been varied at ECOWAS election capacity building initiatives.

Among the several approaches, in the view of the UNDP, the capacity-building approach should be gender-balanced, seek women's full participation, benefit and contribution. The World Vision (Australia Program Support Unit) in a document titled Capacity Building, A new Approach: Principles and Practice also asserts that capacity-building interventions are many and varied and focus on a range of policy and program-related areas and are in several areas which include: Research, training, and advocacy. World Vision advises among others that capacity–building interventions can have many different areas of strength; however, a sustainable project requires that it makes a positive difference to participants, works cooperatively with other local stakeholders, has an appropriate strategy, and is viable after external funding ceases. The ECOWAS Commission has embarked on a few election-related capacity building initiatives where there have been gender-mainstreaming revolutionary achievements as well as some major challenges.

The KAIPTC has been the main partner of the ECOWAS Commission for training potential election observers possibly to be deployed in the West African region and the course has a component of gender. The sponsorship by ECOWAS for election observation training at the KAIPTC lasted for 3 successive years from 2008 to 2010 within which out of a total of 53 persons who benefited, 62% were women and 38% men.

The Table 5 below shows the gender disaggregation of participants who have been sponsored by the ECOWAS Commission to be trained at KAIPTC:

Table 6: Training at KAIPTC Sponsored by ECOWAS from 2008 – 2010			
Date Trained	**No. of Total Persons Trained**	**No. of Females Trained**	**No. of Males Trained**
February 2008	15	9	6
		60%	40%
February 2009	13	8	5
		53%	47%
February 2010	25	16	9
		64%	36%
Total Persons Sponsored	53	33	20
		62%	**38%**

The high participation of women in this sponsored training at KAIPTC was not based on a strategy nor an institutional policy, a framework that would have been essential for sustaining the initiative, which ended after 2010. Thereafter, anyone who is interested in being trained to undertake election observation for the ECOWAS or the African Union, at KAIPTC for a Course in Election Administration with duration (for instance): 11 – 22 June 2018, will be required to pay a fee of USD1,000 as well as take care of his or her travel expenses as well as medical insurance. KAIPTC website is strongly encouraging women to apply for the course, an indication that the enrollment of women is not at the same level as men.

The EAD conducted professional enhancement training for Member states EMBs in Cote d'Ivoire from March 25 - 29, 2013 on Voter Registration; and in Benin from June 9 - 13, 2014 on Election Dispute Resolution. At these trainings, the issue of gender was not a consideration in the selection of participants neither was there a conscious inclusion of a gender dimension of the issues discussed. The focus was the technicalities in managing the compilation of a voter's register that was acceptable to electoral stakeholders and how to prevent and manage the electoral disputes. Though voter registration processes and election disputes have tremendous impact and implications for women's political participation and representation, at the

time of these capacity building trainings in 2013 and 2014, there was not yet the awakening within the EAD to mainstream gender in its activities. The table below provides an indication of females and males who benefited from the training in 2014:

Table 7: Participants at ECOWAS Organized Training on Election Dispute Resolution in 2014

	Country	Name	Status/Institution	Sex
1	BENIN	Mevo Edwige B. J.	SAP/CENA	Female
2		Olihide Clotaire	SAP/CENA	Male
3		Sambieni Kouame	Constitutional Court	Male
4	BURKINA FASO	Souleymane Compaore	Commissioner/CENI	Male
5		Diarra Dramane	General Secretary/CENI	Male
6	CAPE VERDE	Elba PIRES	Commissioner CNE	Female
7	COTE D'IVOIRE	Belai Marie-Noelle	Head, Legal Dept. CEI	Female
8		Djoussou Edouard	Deputy Director, Training & Civic Education	Male
9	GAMBIA	Joseph Colley	Director, Training & Communication, IEC	Male
10		Anthony Robert Secka	IEC Chief Electoral Officer	Male
11	GHANA	Daniel Amanyo	Deputy Director, Elections	Male
12	GUINEA BISSAU	Augusto Mendes	Chairperson, CNE	Male
13		Etchen Sambu	Advisor to the Chairperson, CNE	Male
14	GUINEA	Amadou Salif Kebe	Director, Legal Dept. CENI	Male
15		Francis N'kpa Koulemou	Advisor, Technical Partners CENI	Male
16	LIBERIA	Alvin Teage Jalloh	Liberia National Election Commission (NEC)	Male
17		Muana Sando Ville	Head, Dispute Resolution, NEC	Male
18	MALI	Seydou SAMAKE	DGE	Male
19		Mamadou Diamoutani	CENI	Male
20	NIGER	Saïd Adelé	Independent Consultant, IFES	Female
21		Rabiou Adamou	CENI	Male
22		Zeinabou Idda	CENI Niger	Female

23	NIGERIA	Chinedu Chukwuemeka	Elections Expert	Male
24		Uche Elekwa	INEC Nigeria	Male
25		Ngozi Irene Oghuma	INEC Nigeria	Female
26	SENEGAL	Mbayang Leyti Ndiaye	Member, CENA	Female
27	SIERRA LEONE	Steven Sallu Kabba	Election officer, NEC	Male
28		Christopher A.A. Jones	Election officer, NEC	Male
29	TOGO	Tozim Potopere	Member CENI	Male
30	ECOWAS STAFF	Remi Ajibewa	PPO, Political Affairs & International Cooperation	Male
31		Oke Francis	Chef Division Assistance Electoral	Male
32		Barou Luther	Research Officer/Division Electoral Assistance	Male
33		Garba Djibo	Secretary	Male
34		Sebastine Ekemonye	Protocol	Male
35		Emerenini Eucharia	Accountant	Female

Total participants: 35; Female 8 (23%); Male 27 (77%)

The emergence of gender mainstreaming in electoral capacity building training can be said to have started with the collaboration between the ECOWAS EAD and the ECOWAS Gender Director in 2015 and 2016. With the financial support of DANIDA, joint EAD – Gender Directorate BRIDGE Training workshops on gender and election were conducted in partnership with various ministries responsible for women in Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Nigeria, and Togo, which culminated in the drafting of the ECOWAS Gender and Election Strategic Framework (GESF). After ECOWAS Ministers and Heads of State adopted the GESF in 2017, Implementation Workshops were held in the Gambia, Liberia, Mali, and Sierra Leone. Below shows gender disaggregation among participants:

Table 8: Gender and Elections Capacity Building Training from 2015 -2018					
Year	**Country**	**Total**	**Women**	**Men**	**Training**
2015	Nigeria	81	71	10	BRIDGE
2015	Burkina Faso	45	36	9	BRIDGE
2015	Togo	50	44	6	BRIDGE
2015	Guinea	30	26	4	BRIDGE
2015	Cote D'Ivoire	42	37	5	BRIDGE
2017	Liberia	25	22	3	GESF IW Implementation Workshop
2017	Sierra Leone	27	23	4	GESF IW Implementation Workshop
2018	Mali	30	24	6	GESF IW Implementation Workshop
2018	Gambia	43	25	18	GESF IW Implementation Workshop
	TOTAL	**373**	**308 (83%)**	**65 (17%)**	

As of October 2018, a total of 378 persons were trained in gender and electoral issues, out of which 308 participants making up 83% are women. The collaboration between the EAD and the Gender Directorate is virtually the beginning of a gender mainstreaming revolution in electoral assistance within the ECOWAS Commission. From August 27 – 30, 2018, a regional BRIDGE workshop on Gender and Election and a Round table Discussion on Elections and Violence, was organized jointly by the ECOWAS and the UNEAD, which was attended by 13 men (28%) and 34 women (72%). The trend is completely creating a new gender-equality gap during capacity building.

Table 9: ECOWAS Capacity Building Training Gender Equity Gap			
Some ECOWAS Capacity Building Activities	**Women**	**Men**	**Equality Gap**
Training at KAIPTC sponsored ECOWAS from 2008 – 2010	62%	38%	**Negative 12 (38 – 50)**
Participants at ECOWAS organized Training on Election Dispute Resolution in 2014	23%	77%	**Negative 27 (23 – 50)**
Gender and Elections Capacity Building Training from 2015 -2018	83%	17%	**Negative 33 (17 – 50)**

The Equality Gap indicates how far the situation is from a 50/50 participation of both men and women. For instance, the Equality Gap here is calculated by what the lower category either men or women needs to attain 50/50. This summary indicates that there were more women when ECOWAS sponsored people for training in KAIPTC and when it collaborated with the Gender Directorate than when the EAD conducted training alone. This also indicates a need for a conscious gender policy within the ECOWAS Commission in general and the EAD when it comes to election capacity building to strive for a 50/50 participation of women and men.

3.1 The ECOWAS Gender and Election Strategic Framework

The ECOWAS Ministers of Gender and Women Affairs adopted the ECOWAS Gender and Election Strategic Framework (GESF) and Action Plan on the 10th of February 2017 in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire. The Ministers made a commitment to implement the ECOWAS Gender Policy Framework for Gender and Elections and its Plan of Action and other Strategic documents presented as evidenced in the Final Communique of the Meeting attached as Annex 2. The ECOWAS Gender and Election Strategic Framework (GESF) and Action Plan was subsequently adopted at the 51st Ordinary Session of ECOWAS Heads of State and Government convened on 4 June 2017 in Monrovia, Republic of Liberia. The ECOWAS Gender and Election Strategic Framework (GESF) and Action Plan is to serve as an advocacy tool to mobilize support :from all stakeholders including Governments, Election Management Bodies (EMBs), religious and traditional authorities, legislature, civil society, political parties, and the judiciary. The enhancement of political participation and representation of women in West Africa should be a shared responsibility of both women and men.

The GESF acknowledges that West African countries are signatories to a number of key international legal documents and human rights standards relating to non-discrimination and women's rights and it is now time for action by both men and women. The ECOWAS GESF has Ten Strategic Pillars to address political, electoral, and socio-economic barriers to women's participation in elections in West Africa:



A Malian Woman votes in 2013

Pillar 1

Gender and Legal Framework for Elections requires ECOWAS countries using Proportional Representation electoral system to adopt a list of candidates, which provides both men and women an equal opportunity of being elected while those that use FPTP (First Past The Post) require at least 30% of candidates of each political party to be female or male. An incentive and sanctioned system should be applied.

Pillar 2

Stakeholder Mobilisation and Strategic Partnerships require that traditional/religious/ educational authorities and other male local communities' gatekeepers should lend their support to the political participation and representation of women.



Pillar 3

Pre-elections Gender and Election Capacity Building acknowledges that long-term capacity-building enhances the quality of women's political engagement and boosts their electability; and requires young women to be nurtured to alternate youth leadership position with males within political parties.

Pillar 4

Civic and Voter Education requires sensitization of the public about women to promote tolerance and consolidate the political rights of women.

Pillar 5

Gender and Institutional Framework for Elections require all EMBs to have a Gender Desk, an institutional gender policy; and should publish gender-disaggregated data as part of the information declared after every election.

Pillar 6

ECOWAS Election Observation Missions requires LTEOMs and STEOMs provide equal opportunity for males and females; and the progress of women's political participation should be assessed.



Pillar 7

Funding Gender and Election requires a level electoral playing field where funding should not be a barrier for women candidates.

Pillar 8

Gender and Electoral Security requires special security arrangements to ensure that women are protected from harassment, intimidation, and violence.

Pillar 9

The Media, Gender, and Election requires gender-sensitive reporting, focus on women's electoral rights, and provide a platform to highlight programs and grant visibility to female candidates.

Pillar 10

Post-election Capacity Development for Elected Women recognizes that newly elected women need capacity building in the processes of law-making and governance in general.

There is an Action Plan of the ECOWAS GESF that provides a list of activities for the period of 5 years (2017 – 2022), and it seeks among others to:

1. Mainstream gender in all legal framework for elections
2. Enhance the participation of women in the management of the electoral process, and production of gender-disaggregated electoral data.
3. Identify and address challenges faced by women in the electoral process.
4. Reduce the cultural and religious barriers/ challenges to women's political participation and representation.
5. Strengthen platforms of women's NGO networks for peaceful elections
6. Enhance the technical capacity of women to effectively engage throughout the electoral cycle, including after they are elected.
7. Adopt gender-sensitive civic and voter education and enhance the knowledge of female candidates in the use of a variety of media techniques.
8. Mainstream gender, and improve the participation of women in election observation at both regional and domestic levels in ECOWAS member states.
9. Encourage partnership with media to promote female candidates and promote gender and security-sensitive media reporting.
10. Promote female candidature, and garner support from males at all levels. Ensure the safety and security of women throughout the electoral cycle at all levels, and promote political tolerance towards female candidates.

3.2 ECOWAS Commission Collaboration with ECOWAS Female Parliamentarians.

The ECOWAS Female Parliaments (ECOFEPA) was created in recognition of the crucial role of women in promoting peace, development, and strengthening of democracy in West Africa. ECOFEPA held its first summit in May 2018 in Abuja, which provided a great opportunity for awareness creation on the provisions and strategies in the ECOWAS Gender and Elections Strategic Framework and to facilitate a capacity building session on "Gender Sensitive Legislature". ECOFEPA Members in collaboration with the Department of Gender and Social Affairs and EAD of the ECOWAS Commission, DANIDA, and the UN Women hosted the First ECOFEPA General Assembly on the theme: Enhancing ECOWAS Women's Political Participation and Representation in Democracy and Governance in West Africa". The Strategic Objective of an ECOFEPA Action Plan is to "Defend and Ensure increase of Women's Representation". The percentage of women's share of ECOWAS parliamentary seats as of September 2018 is about 20.9%, which is lower than the abysmal representation of the women in many national parliaments with an average of 23.6% in Sub-Saharan Africa, as of October 2018.

The ECOWAS Ministers of Justice endorsed the Supplementary Act on the enhancement of Powers of the ECOWAS Parliament on December 7, 2016. Specifically, Article 18 of the Supplementary Act on the Enhancement of the Powers of the Parliament, states that "Each Member-State shall ensure at least 30 percent female representation in their delegation to the Parliament." However, From Table 9, there were only three out of the 15 Member states that met the target of 30 percent representation in their delegation. Increase female representation in the ECOWAS Parliament has the potential to strengthen gender-sensitive budget and oversight of ECOWAS Community Institutions and must be encouraged.

Table 10: Statistics of Female Representation in the ECOWAS Parliament (Fourth Legislation)					
S/N	**Name Of Country**	**No. of seats**	**No. of Male representation**	**No. Female Representation**	**Percentage (%) female representation**
1	Benin	5	4	1	20%
2	Burkina Faso	6	5	1	16.7%
3	Cape Verde	5	3	2	40%
4	Cote D'Ivoire	7	5	2	28.6%
5	The Gambia	5	4	1	20%
6	Ghana	8	7	1	12.5%
7	Guinea	6	3	3	50%
8	Guinea Bissau	5	3	2	40%
9	Liberia	5	4	1	20%
10	Mali	6	4	2	33.3%
11	Niger	6	5	1	16.7%
12	Nigeria	35	31	4	11.4%
13	Senegal	6	5	1	16.7%
14	Sierra Leone	5	4	1	20%
15	Togo	5	4	1	20%
	Total No	115	91	24	20.9%
The Statistics of Female Representation in the ECOWAS Parliament					**20.9%**

The summit was, therefore, organized as a forum to discuss how to operationalize and enhance compliance on the 30% mandate of female delegation representation at the ECOWAS Parliament. Thus, the summit brought together, among others, female members of the ECOWAS Parliament; female members of national and state parliaments; Committee on Gender and Social Affairs; former female members of ECOWAS Parliament and national parliaments; ECOWAS Civil Society Regional Chair; West African Women Association; ECOWAS Gender Centre; UN Women; ECOWAS Commission; the diplomatic corps; AU Commission; INEC officials; Inter-party Advisory Council of Nigeria; Nigeria Minister of Women Affairs; Women in Politics; ECONEC; the Judiciary, political parties, CSOs and Development Partners. Also, among participants were national networks of religious bodies, national networks of traditional authorities; national bodies responsible for civic and voter education, election security task-forces, government ministries and the media to foster discussion and recommendations on the theme of the meeting.

By collaborating with ECOFEPA to hold the summit, the ECOWAS Commission

has set in motion a useful platform to work towards improving women's representation which is among the lowest in the world, due to the acknowledged fact of the myriad of cultural, social, political, economic barriers in the processes and structures to exercise and enjoy their electoral rights.

3.3 Gender and ECOWAS Commission Institutional Culture

Institutional culture is "characterized by a set of unspoken rules that shape values, beliefs, habits, patterns of thinking, behaviors, and styles of communication". A gender institutional culture assessment of the ECOWAS Commission would mean gauging the values, beliefs, and principles as well as policies and strategies of management and staff of the Commission in relation to equal empowerment of both men and women. The culture includes the organization's vision, assumptions, systems, and management style. There are tools to assess institutional culture, but this report would be limited to the generality of the behavior of staff within the ECOWAS regarding gender issues.

The ECOWAS Commission has no internal gender strategy and policy. There is no department in the Commission that has assigned anyone as a dedicated gender focal person, a situation which has resulted in giving low priority by departments when they are invited to gender-related events. Sadly, there is the tendency by various departments within the Commission to focus on their own department or other activities, which they may consider as the higher priority. It is not uncommon for officials from other departments to ask to be excused and sometimes leave in the middle of the events organized by the gender directorate. There is a lack of clear objectives, goals, vision, lack of transparency, and accountability. Gender mainstreaming should be a shared responsibility by all departments of the ECOWAS Commission thereby establishing and engendering accountability from the entire institution.

There is, therefore, the need for each department to have a Gender Focal Person who would be charged with providing a regular report on how gender dimensions of their own department activities are being addressed. Gender focal persons would constitute enablers of positive institutional culture. There is the need for team-building, professional development and support, access to information, resources, tools, and effective communication for the gender focal persons within the ECOWAS Commission.

3.4 Youth and Gender Political Participation in West Africa

There is a popular saying that "the time for the youth is now, not the future". According to the UN, Africa is the world's youngest continent, as the proportion of youth among the region's total population is higher than in any other continent. In 2010, 70 percent of the region's population was under the age of 30. According to a study by Mengistu (2016), though the youth account for the high proportion of the African population, they are extremely excluded from socio-economic and political spheres.

The IPU (2016) in a publication; Youth Participation in National Parliament indicated that "almost one-third of all the single and lower houses, and more than 80 percent of the upper houses, have no under-30 parliamentarians at all". The IPU describes "young" as age under 30. The global picture is gloomy, and West Africa unfortunately is the region with the lowest representation of young people in national parliaments, according to the IPU rankings below:

Table 10: Sub-regional Rankings for the Parliamentarians under 30.

Table 11: Subregional rankings for parliamentarians		
Under 30		
Subregion	**Mean %**	**N**
Caribbean	4.0%	4
South America	3.9%	9
East Africa	3.4%	5
Europe	3.1%	44
Central America	2.7%	3
North America	1.9%	2
South Asia	2.2%	2
Southern Africa	1.5%	6
South-East Asia	1.2%	8
East Asia	1.1%	4
Middle East	0.3%	10
Central Africa	0.2%	7
West Africa	0.2%	7
Total	**2.1%**	**126**

The question often comes up whether the "supersizing Africa youth population, is a blessing or curse?". The same question may be asked in relation to how the phenomenon affects the participation and representation of young female in Africa. The youth would be an asset as aptly said by Ananpansah (2017) if they *"being seen as necessary partners in development", instead of "constantly being employed by unscrupulous politicians and reduced as tools and stooges and subjected to selfish political tricks, emasculations, manipulations and used as means to an end defined by the whims of selfishly corrupt leaders".*

ECOWAS Commission's electoral assistance initiatives could be a contribution to encouraging the political empowerment of young people. Below is a breakdown of the level of participation of young people in ECOWAS STEOM:

Table 12: Youth Participation in ECOWAS Election Observation

Country /Election from 2015 - 2018	Total Number of Short-Term Observers	Short-Term Observers Aged below 30 Years	Percentage of Short-Term Observers below 30 Years
Guinea-Bissau	200	71	35.5%
Nigeria (2015)	350	222	63%
Togo (2015)	80	33	41%
Cote d'Ivoire (2015)	150	60	40%
Burkina Faso	150	84	56%
Guinée (2015)	150	85	57%
Benin (2016)	150	48	32%
Cabo Verde (2016)	80	40	50%
Ghana (2016)	100	32	32%
Liberia (2017)	150	70	47%
Sierra Leone	150	63	42%
Mali (2018)	150	79	53%
Total	**1860**	**887**	**48%**

Inclusion of young people in election observation affords them an opportunity to learn from experiences in other jurisdiction and to strive to improve on their own country situation. Out of 12 election observation missions, there were 5 occasions where youth formed 50% or above of the composition. The highest representation of youth participation in STEOM was in Nigeria with 63% and Guinea with 57%.

High youth participation has not always translated into young women being adequately represented in STEOMs. For instance, with 63% youth composition of STOs that ECOWAS deployed in Nigeria, women composed only 31% of the whole mission. On the contrary, in Guinea, with 57% youth composition, women made up the majority proportion of the mission with 60%.

The analysis of the current observer recruitment scenario, therefore, does not indicate a conscious and conscientious effort to ensure consistent equal participation of both young men and young women in ECOWAS STEOMs.



4.0 **ECOWAS, Political Parties, Gender and Elections**

4.0 ECOWAS, Political Parties, Gender and Elections

The convergence principles of the ECOWAS Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, under Article 1, indicates political parties shall be formed and shall have the right to carry out their activities freely, within the limits of the law. Article 13 posits that a fact-finding mission should be sent to an ECOWAS Member State conducting an election and maybe followed by an exploratory mission aimed, among others, at collecting all pertinent information relating to the contesting candidates or political parties; and meeting all candidates, political party leaders, government authorities and other competent bodies. The protocol recognizes that political parties are a part of the building blocks for democratization and are indispensable players in elections.

However, political parties in West Africa have not been under any explicit obligation within ECOWAS Supplementary Protocol to respect the equality of sexes in political representation. The provision that seems to suggest indirectly is Article 2, indicates that "Member states shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that women have equal rights with men to vote and be voted for in elections, to participate in the formulation of government policies and the implementation thereof and to hold public offices and perform public functions at all levels of governance". Learning from the Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters (2002) the principles of Europe's electoral heritage promotes equal representation of the sexes and supports that legal rules requiring a minimum percentage of persons of each gender among candidates with respect to the principle of equal suffrage. It will remain an incomplete endeavor if gender dimension, specifically challenges that women encounter in the electoral process continues not to be part of the issues for political parties to answer during fact-finding missions of ECOWAS EAD and ECONEC.

4.1 Gender Audit of the ECONEC

This gender audit of the ECONEC is based on its statute, dynamics in relation to its membership composition and its activities. The ECONEC is a network of national Election Management Bodies (EMBs) of ECOWAS Member States. The structure of the Network consists of a General Assembly, being its highest

decision-making body; a Steering Committee and a Secretariat headed by a Permanent Secretary who happens to be the Head of the EAD at the ECOWAS Commission. The ECONEC Steering Committee consists of five (5) elected persons who must be representatives of voting members of the Network. The network had its headquarters in Abuja, initially in the Department of Political Affairs/EAD of the ECOWAS Commission for a period of four years from 2012 and it was later provided office space at the INEC of Nigeria when the Chair of INEC was elected to chair the ECONEC General Assembly. The ECOWAS EAD is therefore married to the ECONEC.

The ECONEC is desirous of promoting constitutional convergence by harmonizing democratic norms and practices in West Africa and contributing to the promotion of democracy as a political system for responsible and accountable government by inculcating democratic values and instilling democratic behavior. ECONEC's main objectives include the promotion of free and credible elections in West Africa; promotion and consolidation of democratic culture to create a conducive environment for the peaceful organization of elections; sharing of experiences, resources, information, technology, and election documents; and gradual harmonization of electoral laws and practices, as appropriate, capitalizing on good practice in electoral matters.

The ECONEC in its statutes was oblivious of the dynamics between elections and gender and has no explicit provision acknowledging that the significant proportion of electorate are women and the peculiarity of the challenges and barriers that they encounter and thereby specifically did not enunciate the role that the network could ultimately play in contributing to the political participation and representation of women in the electoral and democratization process in West Africa.

The Steering Committee plays an executive role on behalf of the General Assembly and its composition is as follows: A President, who is by law the elected president of the Network; a First Vice- President, who is by law the first elected Vice-President of the Network; a Second Vice- President, who is by law the second elected Vice-President of the Network; a General Treasurer, and a Deputy Treasurer. The only consideration for election/ selection as a member of the Committee is linguistic. Each of the linguistic groups in West Africa (Lusophone, Anglophone,

and Francophone) is represented by at least one voting member. Gender representation was not considered.

Article 2 of the ECONEC Statute states that "the Network is by law a member of the Association of African Election Authorities (AAEA). It was the practice within the AAEA to include deputy chairs of EMBs to its General Assembly, a practice that resulted in Rev. Sr Margaret Magoba, Deputy Chairperson of the Electoral Commission of Uganda, a woman, elected as the chairperson of the AAEA General Assembly. It is not uncommon to find women in vice-chair positions in national EMBs. It is important to point out that gender consideration would be a challenge for the Network so long as it continues as a club of chairpersons of EMBs and not a network of election administrators in the region.

The list of chairpersons of EMBs in West Africa, during this assessment, indicates that out of the 15 ECONEC members there are only two (2) (13%) females head of EMBs, and these are in Cape Verde and Ghana. A look at the ECONEC focal persons of the various member EMBs below reveals that only three (3) of focal persons are females.

The table below shows a list of chairs of ECONEC Members as at the last General Assembly meeting in March 2017.

Table 13: Gender Characteristics among Chairpersons of ECONEC Members as at the Last General Assembly Meeting in March 2017

No	EMB	Chairperson	Sex
1.	CENA Benin	Mr. Emmanuel Tiando	Male
2.	CENI Burkina Faso	Mr. Newton Ahmed Barry	Male
3.	CNE Cabo Verde	Dr. Maria do Rosario Goncalves Pereira	Female
4.	CEI Cote d'Ivoire	Mr. Youssouf Bakayoko	Male
5.	IEC Gambia	Mr. Alieu Momodu Njie	Male
6.	EC Ghana	Mrs. Charlotte Osei[5]	Female
7.	CENI Guinea	Mr. Salif Kebe	Male
8.	CNE Guinea Bissau	Mr. Jose Pedro Sambu	Male
9.	NEC Liberia	Cllr. Jerome George Korkoya	Male
10.	CENI Mali	Mr. Amadou Ba	Male
11.	Niger	Mr. Issaka Souna	Male

[5] Charlotte Osei, one of the two female chairs of ECONEC EMBs, have been replaced with Jean Mensa, another female in June 2018.

12.	INEC Nigeria	Prof. Mahmood Yakubu	Male
13.	CENA Senegal	Mr. Doudou Ndir	Male
14.	NEC Sierra Leone	Mr. Mohammed N'fah-Alie Conteh	Male
15.	CENI Togo	Prof. Kodjona Kadanga	Male

Focal persons are useful in generating attention on a particular issue within an institution. ECONEC focal persons are the liaison between an EMB and the Secretariat of the network.

The table below shows the sex distribution of focal persons in the various ECONEC:

Table 14: ECONEC Focal Persons of the Various Member EMBs

No	Country	Focal Person	Sex	Gender Unit
1.	CENA Benin	Genevieve Nadjo	Female	No
2.	CENI Burkina Faso	Lansane Dao	Male	No
3.	CNE Cabo Verde	Indira M. Tavares	Female	No
4.	CEI Cote d'Ivoire	Madeleine Niamien	Female	No
5.	IEC Gambia	Joseph Colley	Male	No
6.	EC Ghana	Eric Kofi Dzakpasu	Male	Yes
7.	CENI Guinea	Bakary Mansare	Male	No
8.	CNE Guinea Bissau	Manuel Soumaila Sani	Male	No
9.	NEC Liberia	Lamin Lighe	Male	Yes
10.	CENI Mali	Oumar Kanoute	Male	No
	DGE Mali	Boussourou Drame	Male	No
11.	Niger	Nafiou Wada	Male	No
12.	Nigeria	Bolade Eyinla	Male	Yes
13.	CENA Senegal			No
	DGE Senegal			No
14.	NEC Sierra Leone	Abu Turay		Yes
15.	CENI Togo	Kossi Adjolla		No

The ECONEC launched a study on the Cost of Elections in West Africa, an initiative that was an opportunity for some level of integration of gender in election management. The findings of the study was intended to "sensitize and mobilize stakeholders on the need to scale down the spiraling cost

[6] Discussed at a meeting of ECONEC Secretariat staff in Abuja on 13th December 2017, which was also attended by other Senior INEC officials. (Press Release)

of election administration; encourage pooling of resources by EMBs, strengthen transparency and prudent use of available resources".[6] The study missed an opportunity to find out also the cost implication of production of gender disaggregated voters register for each polling station, as is the case in Cape Verde, which would facilitate the production of data on how many women register and numbers that vote, which also pertains in many Southern African countries, like in the 31 July, 2018 harmonized elections in Zimbabwe. The outcome of the study on the cost of election is very vital for election management planning.

An EMB's strategic plan provides a short to medium term roadmap and innovation to achieve the organisation's mandate. Apart from Nigeria, no ECONEC EMB is yet to have a gender full-fledged division within the national electoral commissions. Ghana, Liberia, and Sierra Leone EMBs have gender focal persons. There is no EMB in West Africa that has a gender department.

Only the INEC in Nigeria and NEC in Liberia have an institutional gender policy. Efforts by the Gender Unit of the EC of Ghana to have a gender policy have stalled since 2013, partly due to leadership inertia. It is interesting to note that the issue of a gender desk at the EC of Ghana did not actualize as part of any strategic thinking within the institution but rather a part of a donor conditionality imposed on the government who simply requested certain state institution like its EMB in 2008 to have a gender desk.

The strategic plans of the INEC Nigeria (2012 – 2016) explicitly planned to gender mainstream in its internal processes. INEC strategic plan acknowledged "gender imbalance" as one of its challenges and intended to improve gender equality and raise gender sensitivity throughout the Commission; develop a robust gender policy for INEC; and institutionalize gender advocacy to check gender insensitivity, which was very laudable. The EC of Ghana, also an EMB with a Gender Unit, has absolutely no provision for gender in its 2016 - 2020 Strategic Plan. An institution with a 5-year Strategic Plan (2016 – 2020) that made no mention of gender, means the leadership of the organisation is yet to make gender-mainstreaming a priority issue. The closest the EC of Ghana's strategic plan might have recognised gender in one of its objectives was where it indicates "Effective, broad-based voter education will drive active voter participation", a statement which may

imply inclusion of women. A question to ask at this juncture is whether EMBs gender focal persons and units in West Africa are well trained and are being allocated resources/budget to conduct research and other gender-targeted activities.

The introduction of computerized voter registration facilitates the easy publication of disaggregated data by EMB anywhere in the world. In West Africa, EMBs can generate data on females who are registered voters and women who contested elections at various levels. However, statistics on women who voted are often unavailable.

A rare example of the good provision of data on women's participation in the election can be found in the Gambia, where the IEC gave the percentage of women registered as voters as 53.56 % (474,887 out of 887,500 Total Voters); and voter turnout of women at an average of 59% of total voters during Presidential in 2016, Legislative in 2017, and Local elections in April 2018. It must be indicated that this gender-disaggregated data is not publicly and readily available on the Gambia EMB's website. It is not enough for EMBs to have the data, but the information should be published, preferably on their websites, for easy access.

4.2 Gender and Election Situation Room

The advent of a women's Election Situation Room (WSR) was in recognition of the potential challenges that women face in an election process and the need to establish a platform for information gathering and sharing on incidents affecting women's participation in the process. According to an Election Situation Room (ESR) Tool Kit developed by the OSIWA and AfRO, the concept of an ESR is described as "a platform for collecting and sharing information" with the intent of alerting those in charge of an electoral process to provide a quick response and remedy to any irregularities that may plague the process at any moment. The Toolkit goes further to explain that the establishment of a reliable and credible system for real-time alerts is at the heart of a successful situation room. ESR is an improvement on the traditional observation where there is the gathering of information on the electoral process and deciding later the integrity of the process usually without an alert. Real-time information made available to citizens through an ESR

help in judging the credibility of the electoral process and reduce the risk of misinformation and tensions.

Gradually Women's ESR is becoming commonplace in the ECOWAS Member states and are usually deployed by a coalition of civil society organization working together with UN Women, the ECOWAS Gender Directorate, and national EMBs. Since the first WSR was conducted in 2011 in Liberia, it has been replicated in Sierra Leone in 2012, Mali in 2013, Guinea Bissau in 2014, Nigeria in 2015, Ghana 2016, etc. Women's ESR has been an innovation that pools the expertise of women together for the prevention of violence in elections as well as the engagement of women and youth in the electoral process. In Guinea, COFFIG deployed 2,000 observers when it set up a WSR in 2015. In Liberia in 2017, the WSR deployed 322 female observers countrywide and 73 peace monitors in every electoral district. They organized youth peer-to-peer peace processes and 1,000 women peace rallies in all 15 counties in Liberia. The main goal was to promote peaceful elections.

The establishment of a WSR helps basically to gather useful information and engage relevant authorities in taking immediate steps to ensure that swift and appropriate responses are made to address the problems that women encountered in the electoral process.

According to OSIWA and AfRO, an ESR is effective and powerful if those who use it seek to contribute to the deterrence of any potential violence that may arise throughout the electoral cycle, and provide civil society with the opportunity to conduct regular analysis of the main events and developments, within the electoral cycle and develop sound recommendations aimed at improving the electoral process.

4.3 A Case Study of the Independent National Electoral Commission of Nigeria Gender and Elections: Achievements and Challenges

Voting is considered a human right and it is the responsibility of every Election Management Body (EMB) to ensure an all-inclusive electoral process for all citizens of voting age, devoid of any barriers. Independent National Electoral

Commission (INEC), Nigeria believes in inclusive elections, where all those eligible could vote and be voted for, and that is central to democracy. The choice of the INEC, Nigeria as a case-study are for reasons which include the fact that the country has the largest population (over 197million) and largest voter population (over 84 million for 2019 election) in the whole of the West African region; Nigeria ranks the lowest in the region in terms of the number of women's representation with only 20 women out of 360 members of House of Representatives and 7 women out of 108 senators in the legislature at 5.6% and 6.5% respectively (IPU figures as at November 2018); and it is the only country in the region with an EMB that has consistently considered gender as an important component of its strategic plan and has a Gender Division which has developed an institutional gender policy to address gender issues in the electoral process.

Nigeria is a signatory to a number of regional and international protocols and conventions and in 2006; the country produced a National Gender Policy, which advocates for 35% affirmative action, on both elective and appointive positions for women. In the same year, INEC in committing to providing a level playing field for all stakeholders to participate in elections created a gender group (5 in number) to take care of issues around gender towards the 2007 General Elections and beyond. This metamorphosed into a Gender Desk in 2009. The desk was later upgraded to a Gender Unit and in 2012 as part of institutional reform in the Commission; it subsequently became a full-fledged Gender Division in the Department for Voter Education, Publicity, Gender and Civil Society Organizations (VEP). The Gender Division is the Commission's organ for strategic intervention in opening the space for women's political participation. The Division is responsible for the mobilization of Nigerian women and awareness creation on their rights and sensitization on the importance of active participation in the electoral process. Some of the mechanisms that the Gender Division employs include workshops, conferences, advocacy seminars, public outreach, and capacity-building training.

The Commission's efforts to enhance women's political participation and representation in Nigeria has yielded some achievement amid some challenges. Nigeria is a federal republic made of 36 states. The Gender Division at the head office of INEC has a staff strength of about 10 persons with an appreciable budget from the Commission in addition to donor support. The Commission has appointed a Gender Desk in all the 36

States and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) with a status of a state, which facilitates gender focus activities as well as overseeing gender mainstreaming of INEC activities.

One of the strategic initiatives by the leadership of INEC in 2014 is the development of a Gender Policy with an Implementation Framework to mainstream gender in the electoral process. In Nigeria, the INEC Gender Policy objectives are;



The INEC Gender Policy is a living document, which is actively being implemented. A gender audit of Commission's staff has been conducted; capacity building on Gender and Elections BRIDGE training was held for all Gender Desk Officers in the 36 States and the Federal Capital Territory, as well as Focal Points in the headquarters. Other capacity building initiatives are held periodically to equip Gender Desk Officers with the knowledge and skills

needed for the implementation of their strategic activities at their decentralized level.

The Commission has embraced a broad stakeholder engagement to enhance women's political participation in Nigeria. Over the years, INEC has built a good working relationship with political parties and there have been several meetings with political parties' leadership to commit to increased access for women in the party structure and nomination to contest elections. INEC visits traditional rulers, who are very important gatekeepers to secure their buy-in for women's political inclusion. INEC has held a strategy meeting with Gender-focused(G-CSOs), also joined ranks with Community-Based Organizations and Development Partners to support efforts on strengthening the participation of women in the electoral process. INEC has developed a synergy with respected women activists, scholars, politicians, women PWDs, and first-time voters.

The media can be a friend or foe to the course of enhancing women's participation in an electoral process. The Commission has met with the media on how best to be gender champions and on conflict reporting of election issues. In addition, INEC has conducted targeted voter education programs for women; produced gender-sensitive Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials for sensitization purposes; held traditional marketplace outreach in the states to create awareness. There have also been zonal workshops to enhance the participation of women during continuous voter registration and to encourage the collection of permanent voter cards. Some other significant undertakings by the INEC are the development of a gender-sensitive election observation checklist; compilation of readily available gender-disaggregated data of voter registration and data on the number of women who won elections at all levels.

The Gender Division of INEC has not been without challenges. The Division though has a budget, and staff strength of 36 persons at the state level and about 10 at the national head office, it would have wished it had more financial resources to accomplish all its intended activities, especially at the grassroots level, where culture and tradition are strong.

Nigerians like all Africans are proud of culture and tradition, which have very useful roles in societal development. However, some aspects of this culture produce patriarchy, which creates barriers in certain areas, which affects

women's participation in the electoral process. The sad part of the story of the low political representation of women in Nigeria maybe the lack of commitment by political parties' leadership, who pledge to have more women in their executive and nominations to contest elections, but often renege on this. One of the biggest, if not the biggest hurdle is the absence of a legal framework for compulsory quota by political parties. To get the legislature of Nigeria, which is made up of virtually males, to pass legislation to relinquish part of their political space for women would be the true solution to a situation where a population with over 90 million women have only 27 women in the country's legislature out of 468, as of November 2018. In 2015, Nigeria's population was projected at 183 million people, of which, 90,989,254 are females and 92,387,474 are males, according to the National Bureau of Statistics (November 2016 report).

As far as the role of INEC is considered, the Commission can do more by setting the pace further for other EMBs in the region to emulate. Apart from publishing gender-disaggregated data on numbers of males/females who registered; number of males/females who were candidates; and number of males/females elected, INEC as part of final declaration of election results should publish the number of males/females who voted.

INEC has also duly considered the youth as an important stakeholder in the electoral process in Nigeria and it has been part of its specialized public voter education. INEC Youth Campus Outreach 2018, which was under the theme, "Youth Votes Counts" was conducted in collaboration with Nollywood stars with the support of the European Union. Youth Campus Outreach 2018 started at tertiary institutions to whip up youth interest in voter registration and to encourage a non-violence electoral process.

4.4 Gender Mainstreaming by the ECOWAS Commission: The Case of the Nigeria 2019 General Elections

Election observation is a major mechanism by ECOWAS to measure and support the democratization process in its member states. In election observation, a concept that is gradually gaining credit is the question "who

observes the observer?" One criterion for assessing mainstreaming of Gender in election observation in West Africa is the ECOWAS Gender and Election Strategic Framework. ECOWAS Heads of State adopted the Gender and Election Strategic Framework in Abidjan, la Côte d'Ivoire in 2017, to serve as a guide to enhance women's political participation and representation in member states. Pillar 6 of this Strategic Framework urges the ECOWAS Commission to ensure that long-term and short-term election observation missions provide equal opportunity for males and females and assess the progress of gender and elections in member states.

Electoral assistance by a regional organization in a general election may take several dimensions, such as promoting a gender agenda.

During the Nigeria 2019 General Elections, the ECOWAS Commission, apart from conducting an election observation, partnered with the ECONEC to peer review and offer technical advice to the leadership of the Nigerian INEC. This case study would focus on election observation and not the peer support system. The main reason is that the selection of representatives for the peer review and technical support to the INEC leadership was purely not a prerogative of the ECOWAS Commission. Therefore, assessing gender mainstreaming during the general elections would be best through the selection of the leadership of the ECOWAS observer mission; the composition of the membership of the mission; and the mission's assessment of electoral matters as they affect Nigerian women.

The leadership of an EOM is the image and character of the entire mission. The norm for the choice of leader of an ECOWAS EOM has been mainly males due to the calibre of personalities suitable for the position. This position has often been reserved for former heads of state of West African countries, who happen to be males. Thus, the choice of H.E. Ellen Sirleaf-Johnson gives ECOWAS a break from the choice of a male leading its EOMs. A former chairperson of the Electoral Commission of Ghana, Charlotte Osei, was the deputy head of the mission, which made the Nigeria 2019 ECOWAS EOM the first of a kind, which was led fully by women.

The gender composition of the ECOWAS EOM to Nigeria 2019 may be assessed at three levels: the membership of the Core Team, Long-term observers, and short-term observers. The ECOWAS Final Mission Report of the 2019

General Elections in the Federal Republic of Nigeria was, however, totally silent on the statistics of the gender composition of the entire EOM. Disaggregation of the composition provides further insight into the extent to which gender was mainstreamed in the ECOWAS observer team. Below is a gender breakdown of the EOM.

Table 15: Gender Disaggregation of the Composition of ECOWAS Observer Mission – 2019 Nigeria Elections

	Male		Female		Total
Core team	2	40%	3	60%	5
Long-Term Observers (LTOs)	23	81%	5	19%	28
Short Term Observers (STOs)	137	68.5%	63	31.5%	200
Total	162	**70%**	71	**30%**	**233**

ECOWAS deployed a total of 233 observers for the Nigeria 2019 General Elections. Overall, there were 162 men and 71 women making up 70% and 30% respectively. Three (3) females in the Core Team is highly commendable.

However, it would be noted that men made up over 80% of LTOs deployed. Deploying five (5) women out of a total of twenty-eight (28) LTOs defeats the objective, the spirit and the letter of the ECOWAS Gender and Election Strategic Framework.

Table 16: Composition of ECOWAS Long-Term Observers in Nigeria 2019 Election



Composition of ECOWAS Long-Term Observers in Nigeria 2019 Election

A critical look of the youth (under 30 years) dimension of the composition of the LTOs indicates whether young women and men were afforded the opportunity to observe the elections. It was observed that only two (2) young women were among the LTOs, with the majority being men of above 50 years.

Among 200 Short-term observers deployed to Nigeria for the 2019 General Elections, were 137 men and 63 women representing 68.5% and 31.5% respectively. Even though females constituted a little over 30% of the STOs, it still does not suffice to say gender was fully mainstreamed within STOs per the standards of the ECOWAS Gender and Elections Strategic Framework.

Table 17: Composition of ECOWAS Short-Term Observers in Nigeria 2019 Election



Composition of ECOWAS Short-Term Observers in Nigeria 2019 Election

A scientific question to ask here is whether more involvement of women in a team engenders better performance than having more men? An important characteristic of an effective team is to have competent team members with a clear goal and working interdependently. According to the MIT Center for Collective Intelligence, one of the key drivers of team performance was how many women were on the team. Women play a critical role in enhancing the collective intelligence of groups, as demonstrated

by the research of MIT Sloan School of Management - Professor Thomas Malone, who established that when it comes to team performance, the more women the better. He opined that " if there were more women in the group, the group performed better," This was re-echoed in a *New York Times article*, "Why Some Teams Are Smarter Than Others," where the MIT study on **"Teams with more women outperformed teams with more men"**, was cited. The reason adduced to this effect, however, was partly by the fact that women, on average, were better at 'mindreading' than men." By "mindreading," Malone is referring to the skill of social perception, which is a kind of social intelligence, the ability to read what someone is thinking, through some means of human observation. And what better additional skill to have in an election observation than mindreading?

Given that women continue to be underrepresented in elective positions in the region in general and in Nigeria in particular, the importance of gender equity and promoting the role of women in elections can have positive practical consequences for democracy and governance. It is important to provide equal or equitable access to both males and females, young and old to be part of ECOWAS EOM since these missions do provide learning opportunities and prospects for networking. More women than men in election observation may be a wiser decision.

Gender issues covered by the EOM report on the 2019 Nigeria elections also provide a good measure for gender mainstreaming by ECOWAS. Though gender, by definition, is about both men and women, election and gender issues would usually look at how women's electoral rights are being upheld during an electoral process. Women's electoral rights may be spelled out as their rights to be registered as voters, candidates, and electoral staff, among others. These electoral rights also include access to adequate information to make an informed decision at an election. The Nigeria 2019 ECOWAS EOM report has seen a phenomenal improvement in reporting on women's electoral rights.

The report categorised challenges of women's political participation in Nigeria to be mainly patriarchy, stigmatization, low level of education, meeting schedules, funding, political violence, religious and cultural barriers.

The report provided a statistical indication that "the majority of registered voters were males, accounting for 52.86% against 47.14%

females." In certain geopolitical zones like the South-South, the report indicated that more than 65% of the polling staff were women. Youth involvement in the management of the poll was also high, which according to the report, "translated into high energy level among poll staff on Election Day".

The mission report also put forward several gender-relevant recommendations which include the need for the creation of a support network for aspiring female candidates; capacity building for young female candidates; introduction of a quota system at all levels of government and state-building institutions like the Independent National Electoral Commission and the political parties in Nigeria. The ECOWAS Commission was urged to revise the selection strategy of LTOs so that the composition of teams would be gender-balanced and youth-friendly.

In conclusion, gender mainstreaming by ECOWAS in election observation and support to the democratization process during the Nigeria 2019 General Election may be assessed to be somewhat lacking consistency with the pillars in the Strategic Framework. There has been some progress by the ECOWAS Commission in the areas of leadership selection, core team composition, and highlights of gender issues in its report. Although, there was gender diversity, there however no gender equity in the selection of members of the EOM, overall. The percentages of males against females election observers suggest that: there seems to be no conscious institutional effort by the ECOWAS Commission or strategic leadership to operationalize Pillar 6 of the ECOWAS Gender and Election Strategic Framework within the sub-region fully and comprehensively.



5.0 **Conclusion**

5.0 Conclusion

The key areas from the assessment provide a mapping of efforts by regional and national electoral stakeholders towards achieving gender equality as well as areas for improvement. The collaboration of the Gender Directorate with other departments like the PAPS has the tendency of transforming gender- mainstreaming dimensions in elections in the ECOWAS Commission and in the ECOWAS Member States.

There have been capacity building efforts that culminated in a regional Gender and Election Strategic Framework. Women ESR and the creation of ECOFEPA have mobilized and galvanized women to draw attention to women's political and electoral rights. However, the gender equality gaps, which need institutional commitment, include the following:

Table 18: Identified Gaps in Gender Mainstreaming in Elections in ECOWAS region as at December 2018

1	**ECOWAS Commission**	Gender mainstreaming is not yet fully engrained in the institutional culture of the ECOWAS Commission and the psyche of its staff.
2		ECOWAS Senior Management are not aware of existence of ECOWAS GESF or conversant with its provisions.
3		There is the tendency within the ECOWAS Commission to erroneously perceiving gender as women. Gender and election capacity building has been predominantly attended by women; while technical training on electoral activities like Voter Registration are mostly attended by males. This perception of gender as women may reduce the role of men in supporting gender equality initiatives.

4	**EAD**	The EAD has capacity issues and does not have a gender specialist to facilitate the mainstreaming of gender in its electoral support activities that it conducts itself or done in collaboration with other institutions like the ECONEC, political parties, etc.
5		No gender balanced composition of STEOM and LTEOM; and limited focus on gender issues in observation report/declarations. There is no standard or uniformity in the level of detail in reporting on gender and elections; reporting not guided by a set of indicators, and there is no consistency in equal participation of men and women during ECOWAS EOMs whether it is LTO or STO.
6	**ECONEC**	ECONEC does not have provisions on gender in its Statute and activities are silent on gender perspectives, so far.
7		ECONEC Secretariat does not have gender specialist thereby limiting its capacity to mainstream gender as reflected in their activities and reports.
8	**EMBs**	Inadequate in-depth knowledge of the current state of affairs of EMB gender-focal units.
9		Not all EMBs have gender incorporated in their strategic plans/ no gender policy nor gender action plan;
10		Not all EMBs have gender focal person/unit and no network exists for experience sharing on gender and election.
11	**Political Parties**	No existing regional obligations and not all ECOWAS States national have statutory/binding obligations on political parties to mainstream gender.

The assessment has proposed an action plan, in the annex, based on the gaps identified above and the recommendations provided below.



6.0 **Recommendations**

6.0 Recommendations

This assessment is mainly to provide the Gender Directorate and the PAPS to develop and improve its strategic focus to enhance gender equality outcomes and activities. There are a few recommendations, which could serve as elements for Action Plan and Monitoring and Evaluation Tool:

1. Gender perspectives should be assimilated internally from the very top of the ECOWAS Commission and its Leadership should truly believe in gender equality, so gender mainstreaming progressively become a dominant trend in the regional body. The ECOWAS Commission leadership and its staff should be always prepared to take this belief to its logical conclusion to avoid the current institutional inconsistency.

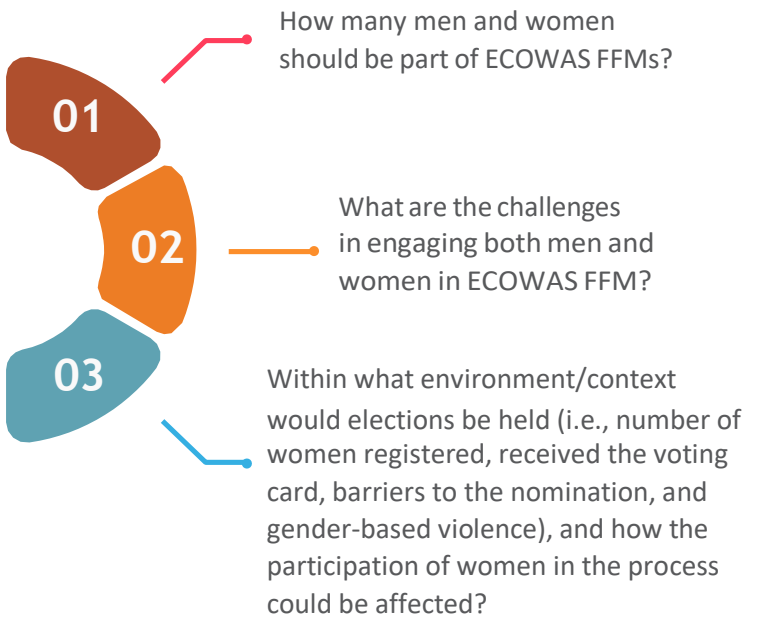
2. ECOWAS Commission needs to dedicate infrastructure and resources to gender mainstreaming, such as a committee or a network of gender focal points across the organization.

3. The ECOWAS Commission needs to have an internal gender strategy and policy. All departments in the Commission need to assign someone as a gender focal person, making gender mainstreaming a shared responsibility by all departments if accountability must be established and engendering in the entire institution. The gender focal persons in each department need to undergo training in mainstreaming gender in project management and an electoral cycle approach to gender mainstreaming. In the case of the EAD, there may be the need to recruit a gender specialist to assist the work in the division. Alternatively, someone from the Gender Directorate may be seconded to the EAD.

4. The ECONEC needs to consider providing space for gender mainstreaming in its structure possibly through the creation of an organ of Gender Focal Persons and/or women leaders in ECONEC. This may be known as the ECONEC Gender reference Group. The Statute of the ECONEC in Article 17 (f), among others, proposes the creation of "specialized departments or ad-hoc committees as the need arises". It is time the ECONEC created a specialized

organ promoting the political participation and representation of women in West Africa. Participation in the ECOWAS-ECONEC General Assembly could be officially two representatives/delegates per EMB (one male and one female) having equal voting rights. For the sake of cost management/ financial constraints by the ECOWAS/ECONEC Network, its Secretariat may cater for the participation of one of the delegates and the EMB to support with the cost of the participation of the other, in a cost-sharing arrangement.

5 ECOWAS Fact-finding mission should be gender mainstreamed. Pertinent gender mainstreaming questions about ECOWAS EAD Fact-finding Missions (FFM) would include:



6 The Gender Audit of the ECONEC as reported in this baseline report, though provides a snapshot of the level of gender mainstreaming, it is limited in scope and further research is needed to provide in depth analysis of what exists in all ECOWAS EMBs.

7 The issues of gender could always be an integral part of every discussion at any ECOWAS and ECONEC event (seminar, conference, training, research, etc.)

8 ECOWAS-ECONEC EMBs could apply color-coded paper for voters register that is provided at each polling station (e.g., pink for list of women and Blue paper for the register of men) and the results declaration forms to have space for reporting on gender disaggregation of voter turnout at each polling station.

9 Gender sensitivity training for the ECOWAS EAD and the ECONEC Secretariats; the establishment and strengthening of structures to enhance gender mainstreaming within departments in the ECOWAS Commission; The Communications Department of the ECOWAS Commission also needs adequate sensitization on gender issues to promote gender equality and equity perspectives in information production and dissemination.

10 The imbalance in terms of beneficiaries of EAD capacity building could be rectified by request EMBs to send two persons and where the EAD has financial constraints, the EMB could be asked to support fully or partially one of the beneficiaries.

11 ECOWAS EAD need to make explicit demand in the correspondence to contributing institutions and the Member states to ECOWAS STEOMs to consider the equal representation of gender in teams representing institutions and countries, thereby making it States parties' obligation is to begin to also look internally to address issues of women's participation and representation in their own countries.

12 The ECOWAS GESF needs to be disseminated widely in the region and sensitization of the same should be made at every opportunity by all leadership and staff of ECOWAS so that all electoral stakeholders especially political parties are aware of their roles. And during fact-finding missions, ECOWAS EAD and ECONEC should, always, inquire from political party leaders on progress on women's political participation and representation and reminding them of IPU rankings.

13 The Gender specialist on every ECOWAS LTOEM should share (and if possible, discuss) his/her report with the Gender Department of the ECOWAS Commission.

14 Gender Department of the ECOWAS Commission needs to initiate a special "Gender and Political Parties" project similar to the "Gender and Election" collaboration between the Gender Directorate and the EAD. Political parties are arguably the most important electoral stakeholder in promoting fair and equitable political participation and representation of men and women. In the era of limited resources, it would be very strategic for the Gender Department to work with political parties to seek accountability rather than any other stakeholders.

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8.0 Action Plan for ECOWAS Gender Directorate to Engage with EAD and ECONEC 2018 - 2020

No	Gaps identified	Actions	Objectives	Time-frame	Output	Remarks
1	Senior Management not conversant with existence and provisions of ECOWAS GESF.	Regularly raise gender mainstreaming in elections at ECOWAS Commission Senior Management level.	Generate ECOWAS Commission leadership commitment to gender-mainstreaming in elections & commit to the GESF. To develop institutional gender mainstreaming policy.		Gender and PAD Commissioners collaborate to set up a GESF Co-ordinating Committee (GCOC). Develop a ToR for coordinating Committee co-chaired by Commissioners of Gender and Political Affairs. ECOWAS Institutional Gender Policy developed.	
2	Inadequate knowledge of the current state of affairs of EMB gender-focal units.	Conduct mapping gender mainstreaming in EMBs.	To identify challenges and promote good practices by EMBs in gender mainstreaming.		Validation of study report by EMB gender focal persons. Capacity building on implementation of provision of GESF. Produce and disseminate survey report. Support project for identified EMBs conducting elections in 2019 & 2020 on gender and elections; develop EMB reporting mechanism to EAD.	

3	EAD & ECONEC Secretariat have limited capacity to gender mainstream as reflected in their activities and reports.	Conduct capacity building for ECOWAS EAD & ECONEC Secretariat.	To equip the EAD and ECONEC Secretariat with both technical and human resource .		Training on Gender conducted for the EAD & ECONEC Secretariat. Recruit gender specialist Designate gender focal person in the EAD & ECONEC Secretariat & initiate specialized training and mentoring. Staff of EAD & ECONEC Secretariat trained as BRIDGE facilitators.	
4	Not all ECONEC EMBs have gender incorporated in their strategic plans/ gender policy or gender action plan. Not all ECONEC Member EMBs have gender focal person/ unit and no network exists for experience sharing on gender and election.	Advocate for appointment of gender focal persons; establishing or strengthening gender units. Create ECONEC Gender Reference Group (EGRG) and ToR to address the gaps. Encourage incorporation of gender in EMB strategic plan and development of gender policy	To promote gender mainstreaming within the ECONEC EMBs and in all their activities as well as provide opportunity for experience sharing on gender and election.		Existence of gender focal persons/ units in all ECONEC EMBs; ECONEC Reference Group established; ToR developed by EAD/ECONEC Secretariat/EGRG; Existence of Gender Policy/Action Plan	

5	ECONEC does not have provisions on gender in its Statute and activities are silent on gender perspectives so far.	Integrate gender in joint or separate ECOWAS Commission and ECONEC activities (seminar, conference, training, research, missions, etc.)	To institutionalize gender perspectives within the statute of the ECONEC and reinforce gender mainstreaming in ECOWAS Commission EAD.		ECONEC General Assembly adopts the ECOWAS GESF; ECONEC Statute revised to integrate gender perspective in its goals. EAD activities in integrate gender perspective in its activities	
6	No existing regional obligations and not all ECOWAS States national have statutory/binding obligations on political parties to mainstream gender.	"Gender & Political parties" initiative to advocate for political parties' dialogue platforms, national legislature and ECOWAS Parliament for gender balanced political representation in 2019 - 2020.	To engender support of political parties' dialogue platforms, national legislature, and ECOWAS Parliament for the passage of national Affirmation Action bills and/or voluntary quotas.		ECOWAS PAD and Gender Directorate supports/initiatives advocacy in countries conducting election in 2019 -2020 for Affirmation Action on gender, conducted.	In collaboration with ECONEC.

7	No gender balanced composition of STEOM and LTEOM; and limited focus on gender issues in observation report/ declarations.	Initiate advocacy for ECOWAS Member States for gender balanced STEOM representation in elections in 2019 – 2020. ECOWAS Observer reports to provide adequate focus on women's issues.	To create awareness of need to support participation of both women and men in electoral activities. To highlight how electoral processes hindered or enhanced women's electoral rights.		Gender balanced composition of ECOWAS STEOMs and LTEOMs . Increased focus on women's issues in observer report reports and more analysis on women's electoral rights highlighted.	EAD to put in place accountability mechanism for gender mainstreaming and reporting.
		Recruit Gender balanced teams for ECOWAS LTEOM. Target training for Women on Election Observation. The use of the ECOWAS database for recruitment of observers lack encouragement for women. Institute quota in composition of ECOWAS .	To support participation of both women and men in electoral activities. Equipping women with capacity to partake in ECOWAS EOMs.			
8		Initiatives on Youth and Gender in Election in countries conducting elections in 2019 – 2020. Conduct capacity building for young women and men to participate in electoral activities.	To promote young women and men's political representation and participation to enhance peace, security, and stability in the region.		More young women and men included in EOMs; Youth participation in elections become part of focus of ECOWAS EAD reports and ECONEC activities.	

Annex 1

The list of experts at Final Validation Meeting on the Report and Action Plan on Gender Mainstreaming in Elections, held in Accra, Ghana from the 6th to 7th, May 2019.

No.	Name	Position
1.	Mme. Noëlie Apithy	Executive Permanent Secretary, CENA, *Benin*
2.	Mme. Maria Do Rosario LOPES PEREIRA GONÇALVES	President of the National Electoral Commission, *Cabo Verde*
3.	Me Amlan Victoire ALLEY	Director of Legal Affairs, CEI *Cote d'Ivoire*
4.	Mme. Abigail Dentaa Amponsah Nutakor	Gender Focal Point, INEC, *Ghana*
5.	Mme. Blessing Ifeatu Obiageli OBIDEGWU	Head of Gender Division, INEC, *Nigeria*
6.	Mr. Theophilus Dowetin	Independent Consultant, *Ghana*
7.	Mr. Paul Ejime	Independent Communication Consultant, *Nigeria*
8.	Mrs. Antoinette Mbrou	Independent, Consultant, *Togo*
9.	Dr. Sintiki Tarfa Ugbe	Director, Gender, Youth, CSO & Drug Control, ECOWAS Commission
10.	Mr. Luther Barou	Programme Officer, Operations, PAPs, ECOWAS Commission
11.	Mr. Abdoul Raouf Salami	Programme Officer, ECONEC
12.	Ms. Mariam Toure	Programme Assistant, ECONEC
13.	Ms. Maryam Tukur	Research Officer, Electoral Assistance Division
14.	TURATSINZE Juvénal	EU-PSS
15.	Gloria Ugwunze	EU-PSS

Annex 2

Communique of the Meeting of the ECOWAS Ministers of Gender and Women Affairs held on the 10th of February 2017 in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire

We, the Ministers of Gender and Women's Affairs of the 15 ECOWAS Member States, namely the Republic of Benin, Republic of Burkina Faso, Republic of Cabo Verde, Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, Republic of The Gambia, Republic of Ghana, Republic of Guinea, Republic of Guinea- Bissau, Republic of Liberia, Republic of Mali, Republic of Niger, the ECOWAS Commission, in collaboration with the Government of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire,

Our main objective being to map out the priority actions to be considered in the implementation of the Supplementary Act in relation to the Sustainable Development Objectives (SDOs) and the African Union Agenda 2063;

Concerned about the escalating violent terrorism, conservatism, economic and environmental challenges and the political instability in certain Member States and its impact on the human security of women and men in the ECOWAS region;

Considering that women and girls are still very poorly represented in the political bodies, national administrations and structures in the West African region;

Concerned that, in spite of the efforts being deployed by our Member States, women are still kept away from the real control over the factors of production and the revenue derived therefrom;

Recalling that women are still confined in their matrimonial status to the so-called traditional tasks of caring and are grappling with little access to land, equipment, loans and developed plots in spite of the land reforms;

Concerned about the very timid recognition of gender-based violence in conflict zones, in spite of the existence of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and

subsequent ones, as well as the formulation and implementation by most countries in the Region of national Action Plans on Resolution 1325 and national gender policies;

Considering the enormous challenges to be met in terms of mobilizing human, material and financial resources for the holistic management of reproductive health issues, in spite of ECOWAS' support to women and girls suffering from obstetric fistula since 2010;

Considering Article 63 of the Revised ECOWAS Treaty, which advocates the transformation of West Africa into a borderless region where men and women can benefit from equal opportunities and sustainably use the enormous resources in the region;

Considering VISION 2020 which stipulates the passage from an ECOWAS of States to an ECOWAS of the People;

Satisfied with the commitments made by the ECOWAS Heads of State and Government through the VISION 2020 to ensuring that all women and men of the ECOWAS Community can live in dignity by respecting for all human rights, and opening up opportunities for all;

Convinced that the realization of gender equality is not only a matter of human rights but an essential condition for sustainable development;

Considering the priorities of ECOWAS Member States for the implementation of the Roadmap of the Supplementary Act for Sustainable Development in the ECOWAS region;

We invite the ECOWAS Council of Ministers to take ownership of the road map for the implementation of the Supplementary Act on Equal Rights for Women and Men for Sustainable Development in the ECOWAS Area;

We hereby call on the ECOWAS Commission and ECOWAS Council of Ministers to make appropriate arrangements for the Minister of Gender and Women's Affairs

of the country whose President is the current Chairman of ECOWAS, to update the Heads of State on the gender situation in the ECOWAS region at each Summit of Heads of State and Government;

We hereby call on the ECOWAS Heads of State and Government to redouble efforts to establish and promote an enabling environment for achieving equity and gender equality in the ECOWAS region;

We hereby encourage ECOWAS to put in place an annual review system of the progress, obstacles and challenges of gender equality within ECOWAS.

We are hereby committed to implementing:

- The Roadmap for the Implementation of the Supplementary Act on Equal Rights for Women and Men for Sustainable Development in the ECOWAS Area;
- The ECOWAS regional Action Plan to combat obstetric fistula in West Africa;
- The ECOWAS Strategic Policy Framework for Gender and Elections and its Action Plan;
- The 2017-2020 Action Plan for the Women, Peace and Security Component of the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework;

We are also committed to fostering cooperation between national Gender Mechanisms and the Department of Social Affairs and Gender of the ECOWAS Commission.

The Chairperson of the Periodic Meeting of Ministers of Gender and Women's Affairs of ECOWAS Member States.
Done in Abidjan this 10th day of February, 2017.

ECOWAS COMMISSION
COMMISSION DE LA CEDEAO
COMISSÃO DA CEDEAO

Promoting Peace, Security Stability in West Africa

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