

CASE STUDIES:
**INCLUSIVE
ACTIONS IN
PARLIAMENTS**



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WOMEN

CASE STUDIES: INCLUSIVE ACTIONS IN PARLIAMENTS

CASE STUDY 1:

LEGISLATION – LANDMARK LAW IN SIERRA LEONE TO ENSURE GREATER WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION

The Parliament of Sierra Leone passed a new law on 19 January 2023 to ensure that at least 30% of Parliamentarians are women as well as introducing similar quotas in other institutions including the government, local councils, the diplomatic corps and the civil service. Employers who breach the new quotas face fines. The law also stipulates that at least 30% of jobs in the private sector should be held by women (for companies with 25 or more employees) and extends maternity leave from 12 to 14 weeks. The new law, ***the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act 2023***, was signed by the President of Sierra Leone, H.E. Julius Maada Bio. The new law highlights the importance of mainstreaming a gender perspective and women's participation in decision-making roles across all areas. According to the IPU global rankings for women in Parliament, Sierra Leone is currently ranked at 155th with 13% of seats held by women MPs.

CASE STUDY 2:

SENEGAL'S PARITY LAW FOR ELECTIONS

Senegalese women succeeded in pushing for a "Law on Parity" (Law 2010-11 Act of 28 May 2010), following the passing of an initial piece of parity legislation before the legislative elections of 3 June 2007, and its subsequent invalidation by the Constitutional Court, (Ruling 97-2007 – Case 1/ C/2007), for violation of the Constitution (Article 7).

This law provides for absolute parity in all institutions that are wholly or partially elective. In practical terms, the law obliges all political parties to place women and men in an alternating matter on candidate lists aiming at a male-female ratio of 50%, failing which, the Electoral Commission has the authority to reject candidate lists. This law gave force to Article 7(5) of the 2001 Constitution, which states that: "the law shall promote equal access of women and men to mandates and functions." These parity provisions were inserted in the Electoral Code. The success of the parity law was reflected in the 2012 national election, which saw an increase of women representatives from 22.7% to 42.7% in the National Assembly and from 16% to 47% in the local legislature in the 2014 local elections.

This feat was achieved through the joint effort of female parliamentarians, the government and civil society organization such as Conseil Sénégalais des Femmes – COSEF [Senegalese Council of Women]. In addition to fighting for the law on parity, these bodies, together with UN Women launched an awareness campaign and a training program on the electoral process to educate and encourage female candidates. Recognizing that the law on parity placed Senegal at the forefront globally in terms of women representation and Senegal is considered one of the most stable countries in West Africa, Senegal is a prime example of a country Nigeria can learn practices from and share experiences on strategies for successful inclusion of women in governance. As of April 2023, Senegal ranks 14th on the IPU Women in Parliament Rankings with 46.1% of legislative seats being held by women.

CASE STUDY 3:

RESERVED SEATS AND WOMEN REPRESENTATION IN INDIAN LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

In 1993, amendments 73 and 74 to the Indian Constitution strengthened the panchayat raj institutions – India's system of local government – and designated that one-third of all panchayat seats and one-third of all panchayat presidencies (Pradhan) would be reserved for women. By 2009, women's grassroots political representation in India had reached 50%. Prior to the 73rd Amendment Act in 1992, women were often restricted from elected positions.

It is estimated that by 15 years after the constitutional amendment, more than two million rural women had served in these decision-making bodies of local government. Subsequently, several States have increased the required percentage of panchayat seats for women to 50 percent.

Since its inception, women Panchayat Raj (village committee) leaders have become increasingly involved in their communities, ensuring that issues such as quality healthcare and education, as well as the financial considerations necessary to realise access to these services, are discussed at meetings. As a result of their participation, there was a 62% increase of potable water projects in these communities initiated by a woman leader, as compared to communities with male leaders.

CASE STUDY 4:

WOMEN'S PARLIAMENTARY CAUCUS - THE UGANDA WOMEN'S PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION (UWOPA)

The Uganda Women Parliamentary Association (UWOPA) is a registered and recognized Parliamentary caucus comprising of all Women Members of Parliament but also open to former Women MPs and Male MPs as associate members. The association has up to 200 Members of Parliament (MPs). It was established with the aim of engendering the legislative process, creating awareness on women's rights, encouraging lobby and advocacy, networking, training and ensuring organizational capacity building. In order to ascertain the necessary critical mass to move forward with its agenda during the drafting of the 1995 Ugandan Constitution, the caucus developed a series of strategic alliances, joining with representatives of youth, workers and disabled persons' delegates.

UWOPA launched a common women's legislative agenda (CWLA) with CSOs focusing its advocacy within parliament and also on constituent outreach. UWOPA members and others also formed a complementary civil society organization, Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE), to provide support and training for women and other marginalized groups as they seek to become involved in decision-making positions.

UWOPA focused on enhancing links between members of parliament and local leaders which would strengthen the links in local and national advocacy for gender legislation by women parliamentarians and their counterparts at a district level. Their strategy was to minimise opposition to progressive gender-related legislation by breaking them into smaller less controversial pieces and actively recruiting the support of male members to table pro-women bills. They successfully reviewed and ensured amendments of an Oil and Gas Bill to include 40% women representation on the Petroleum Authority and led efforts in the adoption of critical bills such as the Trafficking in Persons Act, 2009, the Domestic Violence Act, 2010, and the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act 2010.

It should be noted that Uganda has about 188 women MPs in a parliament of 556. They have a Constitutionally backed Reserved Seat arrangement for women that enables the election of 112 women from each of the 122 districts of Uganda. Like Nigeria, they operate a First-Past-the-Post electoral system.

CASE STUDY 5:

INSTITUTIONALISING A GENDER PERSPECTIVE IN THE BUDGET IN THE UGANDAN PARLIAMENT

In 1996, influenced by the Women's Budget Initiative in South Africa, the Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE), an advocacy NGO, facilitated the formation of a special interest group (SIG) caucus consisting of women, youth, disabled and working class parliamentarians. They designed a two-year training programme for the caucus and parliamentarians from economic policy and budget committees on gender, economic policy, budget issues and advocacy. Trainers were recruited from academia, ministries of finance and gender, and the central bank. The efforts led to the adoption of a Budget Act in 2001 and creation of a new parliamentary Budget Office to (among others) introduce a gender perspective in its independent analysis of the budget. It is reported that 88 women from the communities FOWODE works in, ran for a leadership position in the 2021 general elections and 66 were successful in securing a position of power and influence.

CASE STUDY 6:

PARTNERSHIP WITH CSOS AND GENDER SENSITIVE BUDGETING - THE WOMEN'S BUDGET INITIATIVE IN SOUTH AFRICA

An example of an effective partnership between the parliament and civil society is the South Africa's Women Budget Initiative. In 2000, the South African Parliamentary Committee on Improvement of the Quality of Life and Status of Women (CIQLFW) commissioned two NGOs involved with the Women's Budget Initiative (WBI), a pilot project of the Commonwealth Secretariat, to undertake research into the budgetary aspects of violence against women, poverty and HIV/AIDS.

South Africa's Women's Budget Initiative (WBI) operated between 1995 and 2000. It was a collaborative project of parliamentary committees/parliamentarians and the two civil society partners: the Institute for a Democratic South Africa (IDASA) and the Community Agency for Social Enquiry (CASE). The Women Budget Initiative made a significant input into the budget reform by conducting analysis of the budget allocations from the gender perspective. Between 1996 and 2000, a women's budget was prepared annually. Within its first three years the WBI produced three books, which between them analysed all sectoral budget allocations from a gender perspective. Within two years of the Initiative's birth, a parallel exercise was introduced within government, led by the Department of Finance. The WBI also developed a popular tool to reach

larger numbers of people: *Money Matters: Women and the Government Budget*, a 1998 publication designed as a tool for disseminating information to women as well as lobbying for better financial resource allocation.

CASE STUDY 7:

PARLIAMENTARY CAUCUS- THE FORUM OF RWANDAN WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS

In 1996, women parliamentarians formed the multi-party and multi-ethnic Forum of Women Parliamentarians [Forum des Femmes Rwandaises Parlementaires] (FFRP). The FFRP is formally recognized by the parliament. All female parliamentarians from both houses of parliament are members of this caucus, which has become a model of cross-party cooperation. Members of the FFRP work together across party lines on issues of common importance to women. Its mandate is to ensure gender-sensitivity in the Parliament, in legislation and in government oversight. In the first years of its existence, the FFRP conducted advocacy on behalf of Rwandan women and built up the capacity of its members. Sometimes disparaged as an "NGO within parliament", because of its strong advocacy, it is in fact a formal parliamentary body. The caucus gives women a framework within which to identify legal issues affecting women and an organisational link with foreign donors, for the funding of training workshops, expert technical advice and administrative assistance. In recent years, the FFRP has increasingly focused on legislative priorities and on strengthening constituent service.

The FFRP independently reviews legislation with an eye toward gender sensitivity. Since its formation, the FFRP has grown to be a prominent institution within parliament and a leading voice in the national women's movement. As women's numbers in parliament have grown and the caucus has matured, the FFRP's ability to influence legislation has increased. Its strength was one of the factors that contributed to the success of legislation to combat gender-based violence. The FFRP has a highly consultative and collaborative relationship with civil society organisations. In fact, many women parliamentarians worked in and led NGOs and community-based organisations before entering parliament. The close nature of this relationship has allowed the FFRP to access data and information about the needs of its women constituents and to rely on civil society to conduct advocacy campaigns in support of the FFRP's legislative agenda, such as a recent bill on gender-based violence.

Note that in 2003, the government of Rwanda approved a new constitution that included a quota system for women at all levels of government. The legislation mandated that 30 percent of all representatives, including those in parliament, be women. In the era since the quotas were implemented, additional pieces of women-orientated legislation have been passed, including several laws

aimed at preventing and punishing gender-based violence, laws granting more extensive property rights to women, and key legislation on women in the workforce. With 61.25% of legislative seats being occupied by women, Rwanda holds the record for the highest number of women in parliament and hold the enviable Number 1 spot on the Interparliamentary Union (IPU) rankings out of 185 countries.

A large, faint silhouette of a person sitting in a wheelchair is centered in the background. The person's head is at the top, and the wheels of the wheelchair are visible at the bottom. The entire image has a dark purple background.

PERSONS WITH DISABILITY

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CASE STUDY 8:

MAKING PARLIAMENTARY WORK ACCESSIBLE TO PERSONS WITH DISABILITY IN INDIA

India recognises the rights of persons with disabilities in the parliament, to full electoral participation, including accessibility to parliamentary work. The Lok Sabha in the Parliament of India (the House of the People or the lower house of India's bicameral Parliament) has taken some initiatives to ensure the inclusiveness of differently-abled persons and their participation in every activity on an equal basis with others.

Their Rules allow a member who is ill and is unable to move from his place, to have his/her oath or affirmation made to him at his seat in the House if he wishes. In such a case, the officer at the Table takes the relevant oath or affirmation card to the member. After the oath or affirmation has been made by the member, the Roll of Members is given to him at his seat where he signs it. A blind member can have his Oath read out to him also. A member who is disabled by sickness or infirmity is permitted to speak while sitting.

The Parliament building is disable-friendly. This includes provisions of wheelchair for members who cannot move, separate toilets for physically disabled, and ramps along with the stairs for accessibility, among others. The Parliament library has also made facilities of Braille system for visually challenged members/visitors.

In one of the rooms of Parliament Library, facility of Digital Access Information System has been provided for visually challenged/print disabled users. One system with printer, one high speed scanner with Fine Reader Optical Character Recognition Software (OCR) and Indo Non Visual Desktop Access (NVDA) Software have been installed to make the library accessible for visually and print disabled persons. Two printed publications of the Lok Sabha Secretariat on 'Practice and Procedure of Parliament' have been converted into audio-books.

CASE STUDY 9:

COMPREHENSIVE DISABILITY AUDIT IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF PAKISTAN

In 2021, it was reported that the National Assembly of Pakistan carried out a comprehensive 'accessibility audit' of the Parliament building. This included the installation of ramps where required, ensuring disability-friendly restrooms were present on every floor of the Parliament building, reserving parking spaces for persons with disabilities, creating accessible navigation paths for people with low vision, making electric wheelchairs accessible at all entrances of the Parliament and the reservation of a special gallery for persons with disabilities to enable them follow legislative proceedings.

The website of the National Assembly of Pakistan was revised to ensure that visually impaired people and people with a hearing disability are able to access all legislative matters with no difficulty. Following technological additions to the website, visually and hearing-impaired persons are able to access the legislative business of the National Assembly without any discrimination as guaranteed by the Constitution. The translation of the Constitution of Pakistan into braille for visually impaired persons has allowed persons with disabilities to access and comprehend their fundamental rights and obligations. This special initiative has been recognised by the international community.

On legislation, the parliament evaluates the contents of bills to see whether it includes any discriminatory language against persons with disabilities, or if it intentionally excludes those with disabilities. As part of its oversight, it approved a Planning Commission disability checklist which serves as a filter through which all new policies and infrastructure projects must go through before they are implemented by government ministries. The checklist includes language on inclusive hiring and ensures inclusivity in all newly proposed infrastructure projects such as integrating ramps, elevators, audio and video recording, signs, and rails. The aim is to promote inclusivity in government administration throughout the country.



YOUTH/YOUNG PERSONS

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■ CASE STUDY 10:

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH - CHILDREN'S BOOK BY SRI LANKA PARLIAMENT

The Speaker of the Parliament of Sri Lanka launched a children's book in November 2022 explaining the role of representative democracy and the Parliament of Sri Lanka. The book is published in Sinhala, Tamil and English languages, and is put in simple and informative language designed for children.

The Speaker of the Parliament presented the book to a group of children who participated in the book launch. The aim of the book is to give children an opportunity to learn about their environment and politics from an early age. The publication of the book was financially supported by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) with plans for distribution to schools across the country. Speaking at the event, the Speaker said that instead of education aimed only at exams, children should be given a basic idea about their environment and politics from an early age.

CASE STUDY 11:

EDUCATION, OUTREACH, AND COLLABORATION - CHILDREN'S BOOK SERIES AIMS TO EDUCATE, EQUIP AND EMPOWER FUTURE LEADERS IN TONGA

The Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Tonga partnered with the Ministry of Education to ensure that a Parliament of Tonga children's book series developed by a Non-Governmental Organisation, will be distributed to all state schools of Tonga, where it will be included as a teaching/learning resource under Culture and Language for children in younger classes. The Office of the Legislative Assembly of Tonga will also be using the book series as a teaching tool for its outreach programmes to communities across the Kingdom. (Tonga is an archipelago or group of Islands in the South Pacific.)

The book series was developed by a youth-led non-government organisation called Take The Lead Tonga (TTL) based in the Kingdom of Tonga. Written by the organization's founder, the bilingual Tongan English children's book series was launched to mark the organisation's 5th anniversary. The children's book is the first resource in Tonga created for children to learn about parliament, its role and the responsibility of its Members. According to the Speaker, the children's book is expected to introduce young citizens to civic duties, functions and roles of Parliament, promote early engagement of young people and aims to ensure that their Parliament is more inclusive and stays relevant to future generations.

■ CASE STUDY 12:

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT BY PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

The Parliament of Western Australia provides an excellent case study on youth engagement. They adopted a community engagement strategy to better facilitate the relationship between the Parliament and the public, specifically young people. The Parliamentary Education Office was restructured to ensure a greater focus on improving Parliament's branding and communication, including the terminology and language used. Specific goals were adopted which included modernising their processes to ensure they are more accessible to the community, particularly young people. In furtherance of this, the Parliament developed and maintained several programmes and initiatives targeted at youths. Some of them are outlined below.

University Partnerships

The Parliament facilitates an annual 12-week research programme for high performing university students, majoring in any university discipline. The programme is a cooperative venture between the Parliament of Western Australia and the State's universities. Members of Parliament nominate up to two topics for consideration for selection by participating students and students assume the role of researcher under the guidance of a Member of Parliament.

The programme aims to achieve the following:

- » provide an information resource for Members of Parliament in the development of policy and legislation (reports that are passed by the University are held in the Parliamentary Library and in the respective university library)
- » allow students gain exposure to the roles and functions of Parliament/Parliamentarians, government and key community and policy issues
- » develop students' research skills, particularly critical thinking and analysis.

Over 300 reports have been produced since the programme commenced in 1992, from a very diverse range of topics including the analysis of voting systems, use of renewable energy in the state, child obesity in state schools and the benefits of home ownership.

University presentations

The Presiding Officers, Heads of Department and Parliamentary Fellows deliver guest lectures to university students at the different universities about the work of the House, followed by a Question and Answer session.

School Resources

The Parliamentary Education office produced workbooks for teachers and school children which forms part of the curriculum on civics and citizenship. Video vignettes and Fact Sheets on the roles, functions and procedures of Parliament are included. The workbooks have been used as a foundation for regional outreach programmes and as the basis for professional development sessions delivered by the Parliament to teachers.

Regional Outreach Programme

The Parliamentary Education Office delivers a Regional Outreach programme bi-annually, to a different region in the State for students across participating schools.

Open Days

Parliament hosts open days where the community is encouraged to explore the historic parliamentary building and grounds. There is a focus on making these open days a lot more dynamic for young people by injecting live performances that teach about parliament's history.

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About PLAC

Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC) is a non-governmental organization committed to strengthening democratic governance and citizens' participation in Nigeria. PLAC works to enhance citizens' engagement with state institutions, and to promote transparency and accountability in policy and decision-making process.

The main focus of PLAC's intervention in the democratic governance process is on building the capacity of the legislature and reforming the electoral process. Since its establishment, PLAC has grown into a leading institution with capacity to deliver cutting-edge research, policy analysis and advocacy. PLAC receives funding support from donors and other philanthropic sources.

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