

PARTICIPATORY GENDER AUDITS OF PARLIAMENTS

A STEP-BY-STEP
GUIDANCE DOCUMENT



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Participatory Gender Audits of Parliaments, a Step-by-Step Guidance Document

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Foreword

The OSCE and its institutions have long recognized the need to support gender equality. In the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, participating States committed to respect, without distinction, the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all people. Over time, including in the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality, participating States have acknowledged that gender equality is essential to achieving a more peaceful, prosperous, and democratic OSCE region.

The OSCE region has been promoting the concept of gender-sensitive parliaments and the use of gender mainstreaming for decades, but parliaments vary in their level of gender sensitivity. Overall, women continue to be under-represented in legislative bodies. Prejudiced stereotypes regarding the role of women in society, along with risks posed by violence against women politicians, continue to have severe impacts on the ability of women to enter, remain and assume leadership positions in political life. The barriers to women's participation in parliaments must be addressed because diverse and representative parliaments contribute to a strong democracy.

There is still much work to be done to ensure that parliamentary structures are conducive to achieving gender equality. This includes ensuring that legislative processes and societal structures do not perpetuate gender-based discrimination, but instead contribute to the advancement of equality for all. To achieve this, parliaments and legislators must play a central role. Their work must be informed by the analysis of data that is disaggregated by sex and other intersecting identity factors such as age, ethnicity, race, religion, disability and sexual orientation.

The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights' (ODIHR) 2021 Guide — Realizing Gender Equality in Parliament:

A Guide for Parliaments in the OSCE Region — and this Guidance Document — Participatory Gender Audits of Parliaments — are important tools for parliaments and legislators.

These initiatives are positive steps towards ensuring that the needs, interests and perspectives of women and different social and minority groups are taken into account in lawmaking and parliamentary oversight processes.

It is our hope that these guidelines on Participatory Gender Audits of Parliaments, which build on the work of the ODIHR, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the experiences of national parliaments, will serve to support the full implementation of participatory gender audits across the OSCE region. Embedded in the OSCE's comprehensive view of security is the understanding that stability and prosperity are only possible in societies based on mutual respect and equality. Together, as an OSCE community, we must all redouble our efforts to promote gender equality through a gender-sensitive and intersectional approach to legislative processes.

Matteo Mecacci
ODIHR Director

Dr. Hedy Fry
OSCE Parliamentary Assembly
Special Representative on
Gender Issues

Introduction

National parliaments are well placed to champion the objective of gender equality and promote gender mainstreaming by responding to the needs and interests of both men and women in their composition, structures, operations, working methods and day-to-day work. Parliaments are also responsible for producing gender-responsive policy outcomes through decision-making and the adoption of documents within the competence of the parliaments or, indirectly, through gender-sensitive oversight of the performance of the executive.

The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) has a mandate to assist OSCE participating States in promoting women's political participation and to provide expertise and support to strengthen democratic institutions — including parliaments — for advancing gender equality. Ministerial Council Decision No. 14/04 on the OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality¹ tasks ODIHR with the following mandate:

“...ODIHR will assist in the development and implementation of specific programmes and activities to promote women's rights, to increase the role of women at all levels of decision-making, and to promote equality between women and men throughout the OSCE area...”; and

“ODIHR will assist participating States in developing effective measures to bring about the equal participation of women in democratic processes and will assist in developing best practices for their implementation...”

Similarly, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA), as an OSCE Institution regularly bringing together more than 320 Members of Parliaments from the OSCE region, has an important role in promoting gender equality. It does so primarily by providing a platform for interparliamentary political dialogue and exchange of best practices and challenges faced by different legislatures when addressing various legislative questions pertaining to this issue. Through the work of its Special Representative on Gender Issues, such discussions often include sharing of experiences relevant for promoting women's political participation and gender mainstreaming within parliamentary structures. Finally, the OSCE PA, through

¹ SCE Ministerial Council, Decision No. 14/04, “2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality”, Sofia, 7 December 2004, <<https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/7/d/23295.pdf>>.

its Resolutions and Declarations provides gender-sensitive policy guidance to the OSCE parliaments when adopting new and amending existing legislation.

More specifically, the OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality encourages the OSCE PA to:

- “Continue to have on its agenda the issue of equal opportunities for men and women in national parliaments as well as within the OSCE and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, having mainstreamed the discussion of gender equality in the agenda of the Assembly’s Plenary Meetings;
- Further develop the current network of women parliamentarians through the work of the OSCE PA Special Representative on the Gender Issue, in order to promote the participation of women in political and public life at both the national and international levels;
- Ensure, with the assistance of the Special Representative, that it continues to put forward recommendations with regard to gender equality in its annual Declarations
- Continue to produce, through the Gender Unit at the OSCE PA Secretariat, reports on the status of women in the OSCE area and seek to raise awareness by making such material available to all participating parliaments“.

Therefore, in line with their respective mandates, ODIHR and OSCE PA continue to advocate for ensuring transparency and accountability of all parliamentary procedures, practices and standards, including those aimed at gender mainstreaming and conducting gender audits or assessments.

As a result, the two OSCE Institutions developed the guide *Realizing Gender Equality in Parliament: A Guide for Parliaments in the OSCE Region*² (hereafter referred to as “the Guide”) To bring together lessons learned and good practices from 46 national parliaments in North America, Europe and Central Asia on introducing and improving gender sensitivity in parliaments.

It provides an overview of the current situation in parliaments across the OSCE region and includes a wealth of examples of good practice for parliaments to draw on when responding to the outcomes of an audit. ODIHR and OSCE PA proudly co-operated in the making of this document, which contains a comprehensive set of guidance on how parliaments can fully capitalize their potential to implement participatory gender audits. As such, it adds to the extensive OSCE acquis in support of all Parliaments of the region.

² *Realizing Gender Equality in Parliament: A Guide for Parliaments in the OSCE Region*”, OSCE/ODIHR, 6 December 2021, available in English and Russian, <<https://www.osce.org/odihr/506885>>.

This Guidance Document complements the Guide, setting out how to implement participatory gender audits through a clear framework and step-by-step process. It recognizes that each parliament is unique and will undertake the audit in unique circumstances. Therefore, the framework allows parliaments to choose the scope of the audit, the format and the timetable.

GENDER-SENSITIVE PARLIAMENTS: THE CONCEPT

A parliament is gender-sensitive when it actively respects and delivers on gender equality. One of the earliest and most widely used definitions comes from the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). The IPU defines a gender-sensitive parliament (GSP) as follows:

A parliament that responds to the needs and interests of both men and women in its composition, structures, operations, methods and work. Gender-sensitive parliaments remove the barriers to women's full participation and offer a positive example or model to society at large. They ensure that their operations and resources are used effectively towards promoting gender equality. A gender-sensitive parliament is one in which there are no barriers — substantive, structural or cultural — to women's full participation and to equality between its men and women members and staff. It is not only a place where women can work, but also one where women want to work and contribute. A gender-sensitive parliament sets a positive example by promoting gender equality and women's empowerment among society both nationally and internationally. A gender-sensitive parliament is therefore a modern parliament; one that addresses and reflects the equality demands of a modern society. Ultimately, it is a parliament that is more efficient, effective and legitimate.³

Since the initial work developed by the IPU, a number of international organizations have dedicated resources to support the removal of barriers to women's full and effective participation in parliament; to make parliaments more gender sensitive. ODIHR is part of this global community. The Guide highlights that the interaction between academics and practitioners has led to further reflection on the ultimate goal of a gender-sensitive parliament, prompting a new **definition**:

A GSP values and prioritizes gender equality as a social, economic and political objective and reorients and transforms a parliament's institutional culture, processes and practices, and outputs towards these objectives.⁴

3 "Plan of Action for Gender-Sensitive Parliaments", Inter-Parliamentary Union, Quebec, October 2012, <<https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/reference/2016-07/plan-action-gender-sensitive-parliaments>>.

4 Sarah Childs and Sonia Palmieri, "Gender Sensitive Parliaments: Feminizing Formal Political Institutions", in Marian Sawyer, Lee Ann Banaszak, Jacqui True and Johanna Kantola (eds.), *Handbook on Feminist Governance* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, forthcoming).

To be gender-sensitive, parliaments have to do more than increase female representation and add gender-equality policies and practices to existing structures. Becoming a gender-sensitive parliament requires systemic change to ensure that both formal and informal elements of the parliament are conducive to gender equality.

PARTICIPATORY GENDER AUDITS: THE APPROACH

A parliamentary **participatory gender audit** (hereafter also referred to as an “audit”) is an assessment led, designed and undertaken by an external expert, with the close participation of, and consultation with, the parliamentary leadership, Members of Parliament, parliamentary staff and relevant civil society organizations. A participatory gender audit entails gathering and discussing information from multiple and diverse sources to develop an objective understanding of current practices and processes. External experts can be from non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academia or an international organization. The external expert (or team of experts in the case of very big and complex parliamentary structures) should have a background in parliamentary affairs and research into gender and politics, ideally with both academic and practical experience. The external expert will have exceptional understanding of the national political and party system as a precondition for the successful implementation of an audit. In some cases, it is advisable to have a team, consisting of an international and national expert, whose experience and qualifications are complementary.

The **purpose of the participatory gender audit** is to help parliaments assess the degree to which they are gender-sensitive and gender-responsive in their key functions of representation, lawmaking and oversight, and to formulate recommendations to improve gender sensitivity within parliament.

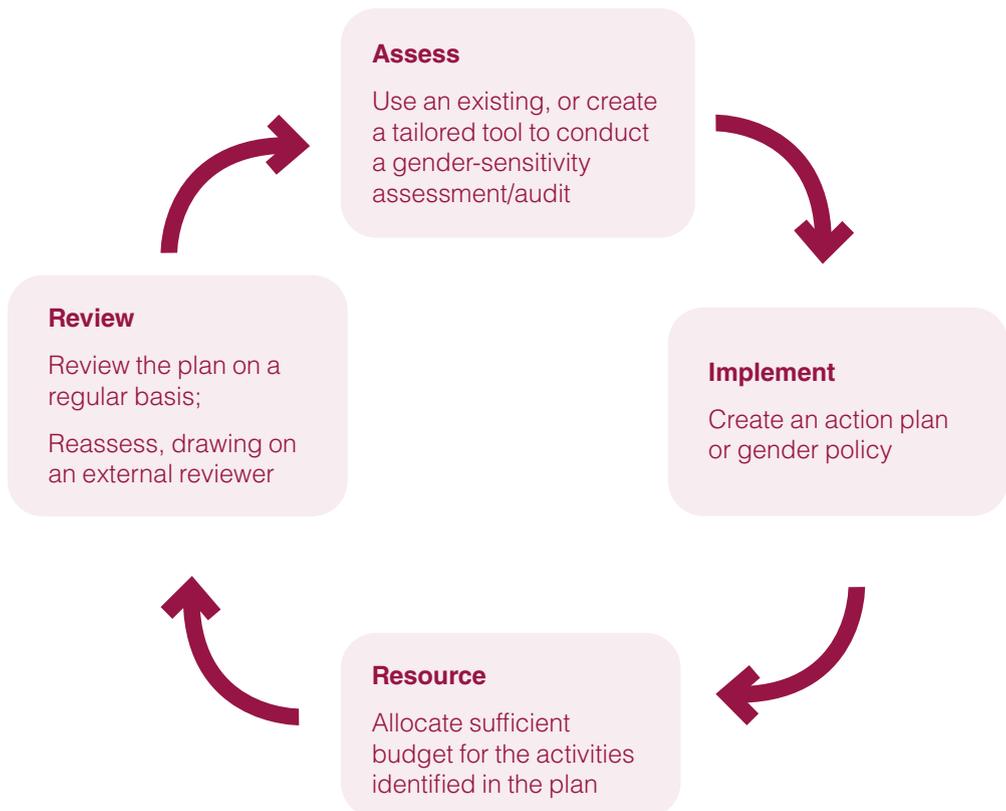
Parliaments vary in their level of gender sensitivity and there is room for improvement across the OSCE region. Participatory gender audits are relevant to all parliaments, whatever the political system and at whatever stage of development. The audit is not intended to rank parliaments but rather to help them identify their strengths and weaknesses and to determine priorities for improving the gender-sensitivity of the institution.

A participatory gender audit provides a basis for discussion among Members of Parliament (MPs), decision-makers in the parliamentary administration, parliamentary staff and civil society organizations.

Following an audit process, the external expert **produces a report** setting out their findings and recommendations. Parliament then discusses and approves the report and develops a **parliamentary gender action plan** based on the recommendations. Then, with the appropriate resources, the plan is implemented. Ideally, this is part of a process of continuous improvement with an independent, external or internal review and the option of a further audit or assessment process. The aim is for parliaments to become ever more gender-sensitive.

The Guide (page 6) advises a **continuous four-step process: assess, implement, resource and review** and illustrates it as follows:

Parliaments are complex institutions and many different aspects affect their gender sensitivity. The Guide sets gender sensitivity within the framework of the three **main tasks of parliamentarians: representation, lawmaking and oversight**. This guidance document replicates the framework.



Scope of Participatory Gender Audits



Scope of Participatory Gender Audits



1.1 GENDER-SENSITIVE REPRESENTATION

Representation is the starting point, as this covers who is elected to parliament to represent the people. An audit should begin by considering the processes that affect representation within parliament. This section also recognizes that parliament is a gendered workplace. Gender-sensitive representation is more than the number of women in each parliament. It includes the workplace culture and environment for all occupants of the parliamentary buildings. The Guide focuses on two aspects where change is critically needed: supporting Members of Parliament and staff in balancing work and family responsibilities, and preventing all forms of violence against women in parliamentary workplaces. The following issues could be included in the audit in relation to representation:

Subject	Issues
Electing women to parliament	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The proportion and numbers of women and men in parliament in recent elections• Barriers women face when running for parliament• Actions by political parties to improve gender equality and representation of women, including tackling violence against women in politics• The electoral system and temporary special measures in electoral legislation
Leadership roles in parliament	The proportion of each sex in leadership roles such as speakers, committee chairs or in the parliamentary administration
Participation in parliament	Participation by sex, including speaking, asking questions and being members of committees
Caring responsibilities	The infrastructure for MPs and staff with caring responsibilities, including sitting times and the provision of child care
Dignity and respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Formal mechanisms — codes of conduct and regulations including policies on discrimination and harassment• Cultural issues — stereotypes and demeaning behaviour• Sharing responsibility for equality by women and men
Parliamentary staff	Representation of each sex in the parliament's staff, including in leadership positions, and whether roles reflect gender-stereotypical views of men and women

1.2 GENDER-SENSITIVE LAWMAKING

The second section of the audit focuses on lawmaking. Across the OSCE region, international mechanisms and national legal frameworks confirm the principle of equality before the law, prohibition of discrimination and inclusiveness. It is essential that laws do not discriminate between different people and groups and cause unjustified advantages or disadvantages for particular groups. To ensure such equality in legislation, the policymaking process — the process of developing, drafting, debating, amending and adopting legislation — needs to bear in mind the diverse and potentially divergent interests of women and men, and of different social and minority groups. Legal drafters and policymakers need to conduct proper impact assessments and consultations to ensure that laws do not directly or indirectly discriminate against parts of a population. Gender-sensitizing this process ensures that societies' governing rules and structures do not perpetuate gender-based discrimination but rather actively work to advance equality for all. This requires a legislative process that takes account of issues of gender equality.

Various mechanisms, such as gender analysis, gender impact assessments and the integration of gender-focused interventions into laws, can be applied to the legislative process. These should increase gender sensitivity and can be examined during an audit. Gender-sensitive indicators must also be developed to scrutinize new laws to determine if they are achieving its gender-sensitive aims. The following issues may be included in the audit in relation to lawmaking:

Subject	Issues
Gender sensitivity in lawmaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to relevant sex-disaggregated data • Availability of a checklist or other practical tools for gender-sensitive legislative scrutiny • Requirements for gender analysis and gender impact assessments • Requirement for consultations with beneficiaries of laws, including civil society organizations, representing different interests and groups • Use of gender-sensitive language, i.e., a gender-neutral and/or gender-inclusive approach when formulating legal provisions, and compliance with human rights and gender-equality standards in the content/substance of the laws
Gender sensitivity in reviewing the budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to relevant sex-disaggregated data and also disaggregated by numerous other personal characteristics, such as age, ethnicity, race, religion or disability • Requirements for gender analysis and gender impact assessments • The rights and needs of women and men, and of groups representing minorities, people with disabilities and others, are reflected in supporting budgetary documentation
Gender impact assessment expertise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of in-house expertise to help ensure that lawmaking activities support the elimination of all forms of gender-based discrimination • Availability of external expertise to complement in-house expertise

1.3 GENDER-SENSITIVE OVERSIGHT

The third section of an audit is oversight — the process by which parliament scrutinizes the activities of the government. Effective oversight improves the quality of legislation and policy. Gender mainstreaming is a key tool for effective oversight, for which both men and women MPs bear responsibility.

This involves asking questions about the impact that government policies, programmes, budgetary allocations and expenditures will have, or have had, on women and girls as well as on men and boys, in all their diversity. It assesses whether gender-blind or gender-biased assumptions have been made about the beneficiaries of a process or policy and about who the process or policy target is, and whether all groups will benefit equitably. The following issues may be included in the audit in relation to oversight:

Subject	Issue
Parliamentary bodies	Existence, format and mandate of parliamentary bodies in charge of gender equality
Gender mainstreaming	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gender-equality considerations in questions, debates and committee work and in diverse forms of oversight activities, to protect law drafters against unconscious bias and to ensure laws cover everyone equally• Availability of sex-disaggregated data• Gender balance in public hearings
Expertise	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Availability of in-house expertise to ensure that activities support the elimination of all forms of gender-based discrimination• Availability of external expertise to complement in-house expertise
International standards	Monitoring compliance with international standards and norms, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

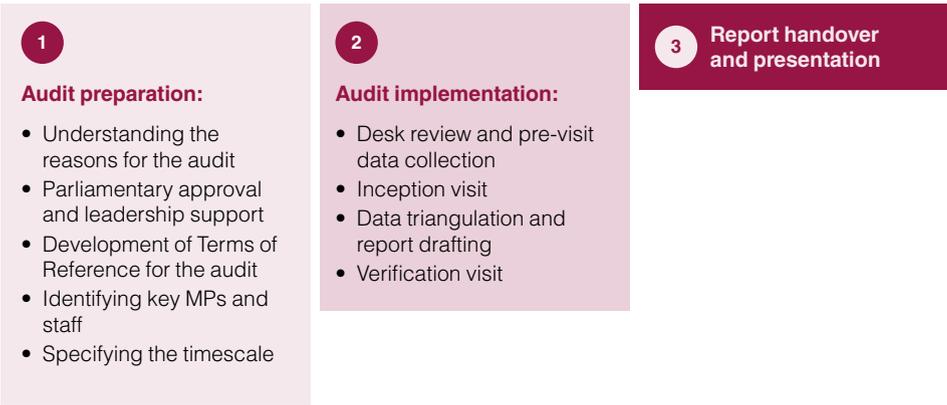
Conducting a Participatory Gender Audit



Conducting a Participatory Gender Audit



Conducting a participatory gender audit takes three to six months and consists of the following stages:



2.1 PREPARATION

A participatory gender audit will only be a fruitful exercise if it engages effectively with all key parties. It is essential to take the time to prepare and agree the audit thoroughly.

- 1** **Understanding the reasons for the audit:** The idea to hold an audit can be prompted by many things, external or internal. It could be part of a cooperation programme with an international organization, or a proposal from a parliamentary committee or individual Members of Parliament, or an idea proposed by parliamentary staff or civil society organizations. As the motivation for the audit will likely impact the audit process in a number of ways, it is important that the reasons for undertaking the audit are widely understood, particularly amongst those engaged in preparing and administering it. It may affect how the audit is perceived by participants, as well as impacting its scope and timetable and the content of the ensuing action plan. The audit process should include ongoing awareness-raising activities, via information distributed prior to the audit visit and via interviews, discussion groups and workshops.

2

Parliamentary approval and leadership support: Every audit must have the support of the leadership in parliament, especially that of the highest authority. That support must then be converted into a formal decision, for example by the Speaker. A gender audit is not only a reflection on the current gender sensitivity of a parliament; it is also an opportunity for change. Change can only be achieved if there is sufficient support from the parliamentary leadership.

3

Terms of Reference: The scope of the audit needs to be agreed in order to develop the Terms of Reference. The tables in Chapter 1 on representation, legislation and oversight provide comprehensive areas for study. Even though an audit will ideally look into all aspects of parliamentary gender sensitivity, the parliament may decide to give priority to particular aspects and not to include others. These will reflect the history of the parliament, the reason for the audit, the time available and the format of the audit. A participatory audit may also include working with an organization external to parliament, such as an international organization, a non-governmental organization or a university. A key part of the preparatory phase is to ensure that all those involved in the audit agree its scope.

The external expert should facilitate these conversations, presenting the potential scope of the audit and giving advice on the reasons for addressing specific areas. The expert can also give examples of formats for audits. This should include the different methods for collecting both quantitative and qualitative information. Describing the previous approaches of other parliaments can help to show the range of options.

4

Identifying key MPs and staff: It is essential to have a focal person (point) or people (points) within the parliamentary administration who can work closely with the external consultant to coordinate the preparatory work and subsequently the audit.

Members of Parliament must be involved in the audit. This can create significant challenges especially if the proposal for the audit did not come from MPs. This should not be taken to mean that MPs are not committed to the concept of a gender-sensitive parliament — although this may be the case with some — but it should be recognized that MPs have many calls on their time. Consideration should be given to the best way to involve MPs, with contingency plans that recognize that priorities for MPs can change quickly in response to external events and unexpected changes in parliament's agenda.

5

Specifying the timeframe: An outline timetable should be developed as part of the Terms of Reference. This should be realistic for the activities that have been identified, allowing sufficient time for all stages of the audit. It needs to take account of parliamentary activities and other potential political events, such as elections. It is recommended that audit processes be done well before scheduled elections, so that the process is not disrupted. A timetable should be negotiated that will give the audit process the best chance of having impact and enabling the parliament to become more gender sensitive. On average, implementation of a participatory gender audit takes about six months.

MODEL OUTLINE 1

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE PARTICIPATORY GENDER AUDIT

Introduction

Background to the audit and introduction to the framework of the audit process

Scope of the audit

Areas for examination during the audit

Format of the audit

Methods for collecting quantitative and qualitative data and format of audit visit

Key personnel

External expert, parliamentary focal point(s), external organizations

Timeframe

Expected delivery of desk review, dates of audit visit, draft report, verification visit and final report

2.2 AUDIT IMPLEMENTATION

Once the Terms of Reference are agreed, the audit can begin. The audit involves several stages of activity with the aim of gaining a full picture of the areas covered by the audit. The audit is also an important opportunity to raise awareness of the concept of a gender-sensitive parliament and to gain support for the audit, its recommendations and the resultant action plan. This should be borne in mind when arranging meetings, allowing sufficient time to introduce and explain the concept and the background. In addition, as part of the inception visit as described below, workshops should include an opportunity for the leadership within the parliament to express their commitment and support.

The different stages are:

Desk research and pre-visit data collection

- Desk review
- Pre-visit questionnaire and online surveys for MPs and staff
- Preparation of inception visit

Inception visit

- Interviews and focus groups
- Workshop

Data triangulation and report drafting

- Collecting further information
- Data triangulation
- Report drafting

Verification visit

- Discussion of the report and testing out findings and conclusions

Concluding actions

- Finalization of the report – agreeing recommendations and an action plan

2.2.1 Desk research and pre-visit data collection

With the Terms of Reference agreed and parliamentary approval in place, the external expert should begin with a **desk review**. Significant information should be compiled ahead of a visit to the parliament. The desk review will identify gaps in information and help shape the questions and activities arranged during the audit visit. The desk review should also set out the background to the audit and all relevant information. It should draw on existing publicly-available information. The results will be contained in a **Desk Review Report**.

Sources of information for the desk review can include:

- Constitution and relevant laws
- Parliamentary standing orders/rules of procedure and other internal regulation
- Parliament's website
- Parliamentary political party websites
- News reports
- Reports of the country and civil society to UN and/or Council of Europe treaty bodies
- Data produced by other international partners

The **structure of the Desk Review Report** should follow the scope of the participatory gender audit; see Chapter 1.

MODEL OUTLINE 2

DESK REVIEW REPORT

Introduction

- Background to the audit
- Information on any previous audits/assessments
- Political context

Representation

Legislation

Oversight

Case examples

Examples of participatory audits in other parliaments including outcomes

The audit should **collect both quantitative and qualitative data**. The initial desk review is an important opportunity to assemble existing data and to shape the content of the questions for the visit. While much of the qualitative data will be collected during the visit, it is also possible to collect information via online surveys with MPs and/or staff before the visit.

Surveys can test out views for further discussion during the visit. Surveys can be used to collect qualitative data after a visit. This is particularly useful when there has been limited involvement of a particular group of people during an audit visit or if it would be helpful to test out particular views with a wider group of people.

The desk review will identify existing information. If a parliament already has detailed information on gender sensitivity readily available, a pre-visit questionnaire may not be necessary. If information is not available, it is recommended that a **pre-visit questionnaire** is completed by the parliament, to provide information about the institution. **A draft questionnaire is provided in Annexe 1.**

The visit to parliament should elicit the greatest amount of qualitative information (see below). During a visit, **face-to-face interviews, focus groups and workshops** are the best ways of obtaining qualitative information. They allow for the easy flow of discussion and interrogation of ideas. While online meetings lack the spontaneity of face-to-face meetings, they are an excellent supplement, providing an opportunity to meet additional MPs and staff members who were unable to take part during the visit.

As mentioned above, consideration can be given to running **surveys among MPs and parliamentary staff** before the visit. Issuing surveys and chasing up responses does take time and should only happen where there is sufficient time to obtain a good response. Such surveys provide an opportunity to gain information on the attitudes and experiences of MPs and staff. This can help to gauge both the understanding of gender in parliament and whether there is likely to be support for particular measures to improve the gender-sensitivity of parliament. Along with the quantitative information, the results can be used as the basis for discussion at a workshop.

An **online survey tool** is good for compiling surveys and responses. It simplifies the collection of data and can provide graphic representations for use in presentations or in the report. A model survey is included in **Annexe 2** to this document.

2.2.2 Inception visit

Central to the audit is the **inception visit**. Each parliament will want to specify the format of the visit to meet their requirements. The external expert should work with the parliamentary focal person to plan the details. There will need to be agreement on participants and the format. Inception visit activities include:

- **Interviews and/or focus groups** with Members of Parliament, parliamentary staff, key personnel from political parties and relevant civil society organizations
- **Workshop(s)** in addition to interviews and focus groups
- The external expert should **prepare the questions** based on the agreed subject areas. **Suggested questions for each of the three areas of representation, legislation and oversight** are set out in **Annexe 3**. Some may have been addressed already in the desk review or in a pre-visit questionnaire.

The visit should concentrate on filling in the gaps and on obtaining qualitative information. Some questions are relevant to all those involved in the audit, while others are relevant for specific groups. In addition, the external expert and parliament can develop questions that are specific to the experience and context of the particular parliament.

As part of the inception visit **workshops** provide the opportunity to involve a large number of people from the target groups. They should explain the concept of gender sensitivity and make presentations that increase knowledge and understanding of the issues relevant to the particular parliament. The parliamentary leadership can demonstrate its support for the audit and outline how the audit fits with the overall development of the parliament. A workshop usually lasts one full day. Multiple workshops can be organized if the parliament is large.

WORKSHOP CONTENT

Objectives for a workshop

- Introduce the concept of gender-sensitive parliaments and the audit
- Provide an overview of the international framework on gender equality
- Contribute through discussions to the participatory gender audit
- Identify potential actions for parliament to take to become more gender-sensitive

Workshop agenda items

- Welcome & introductions
- Speeches from leading parliamentary representatives and leaders of political parties
- Presentation: The 'gender-sensitive parliament' approach
- Presentation and discussion: The international framework on gender equality
- Presentation and discussion: Parliamentary representation, Gender-sensitive lawmaking, Gender-sensitive oversight
- Presentation on information from pre-visit questionnaire and surveys
- Discussions in groups on key aspects of the gender audit
- Feedback & plenary
- Conclusions & next steps

The inception visit discussions will help elaborate actions that the parliament could take to improve its gender sensitivity in the areas of representation, legislation and oversight. Ideas may come from Members of Parliament, staff or civil society organizations who already have views on what needs to change. A range of steps is included in the Guide. The external expert should use these steps to guide discussions on ideas for change to prompt audit participants to consider what actions would be appropriate in the particular context. The process of conducting the audit will help the external expert to understand the feasibility of particular recommendations, and enable them to gauge levels of support for particular actions.

2.2.3 Data triangulation and report drafting

Following the visit, the expert will need to collate all the information and identify any gaps. Follow up surveys or virtual interviews are useful for adding to the information that has been collected and to fill in gaps. Annexe 3 includes potential questions for surveys. These can be particularly useful to gain more views on specific issues and to test out support for possible recommendations.

The external expert should complete a **draft report** in the agreed timeframe. A model outline for the report is set out below. It should then be sent to the focal point for parliament to identify any inaccuracies and for initial discussions on the content and recommendations. The draft report and the recommendations should be discussed during a **verification visit**.

MODEL OUTLINE 4

AUDIT REPORT STRUCTURE

Introduction

- Gender-sensitive parliaments: the concept
- Participatory gender audit: the approach
- Methodology

Findings & recommendations

- Gender-sensitive representation
- Gender-sensitive lawmaking
- Gender-sensitive oversight

Appendices

2.2.4 Verification visit

The purpose of the verification visit is both to report on and to test out the initial conclusions and draft recommendations. As for the first visit, it may consist of meetings and a workshop. Wherever possible the expert should aim to meet those interviewed for the report and discuss the findings and proposed recommendations.

A key component is also an in-depth discussion of the recommendations with the parliamentary leadership, including the political and administrative leadership, ensuring their understanding and buy-in for the process and ways forward.

2.3 REPORT HANDOVER AND PRESENTATION

After the visit, the expert should update the draft report, make corrections and take account of the reflections. A further, pre-final draft should be sent to the parliament for final comments and suggestions. The report belongs to parliament, so it is essential that the parliament is content with the report and its recommendations. These should be used to develop an action plan, setting out who is responsible and the timescales within which the action will take place.

The audit report is an opportunity for parliament to promote awareness and to inform the public of its commitment to improving gender sensitivity within the parliament. A number of steps could be taken such as a public launch event and distribution throughout the parliament to MPs and staff. Parliament can feature the information on its website and set out the next steps it will take in responding to the report, such as the development of an action plan.

Parliamentary Gender Action Plans: Implementing Recommendations from Participatory Gender Audits



Parliamentary Gender Action Plans: Implementing Recommendations from Participatory Gender Audits



The Guide (page 6) advised on a **continuous process through four steps: assess, implement, resource and review**. The diagram in the introduction to this document illustrates this graphically.

With the audit complete, there is a need to move from the first step — assessing — to the second step — implementation. This should be done by developing a **parliamentary gender action plan**. The purpose of the action plan is to respond to the recommendations in the audit report and to develop a programme of concrete activities to improve the gender sensitivity of the parliament.

Actions should be specific in order to measure progress. The plan should be as detailed as possible, using objectives/outcomes, activities, targets and gender-sensitive indicators where appropriate. There should be a clear indication of which body within parliament has responsibility for overseeing each action and a specific timeframe in which to complete the action. As indicated in the Guide, the plan should be allocated sufficient budget and other resources.

Ideally, the entire parliament should approve the plan, ensuring that commitment across the institution and sufficient resources are in place.

It may be appropriate for a gender action plan to be part of a wider action plan or part of the parliament's strategic plan. It will be important to monitor activity closely and provide regular updates on progress. When approving the action plan, parliament should agree which body will undertake the overall monitoring and review. This will promote continued improvement within the parliament as it seeks to become more gender sensitive. As part of reviewing the gender action plan, consideration should be given to a further audit at an appropriate time.

Annexes



ANNEXES

ANNEXE 1. MODEL QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE PARLIAMENT

This questionnaire is to be completed by the parliament as an institution and in preparation for the inception visit, as part of desk research and pre-inception visit data collection.

1. GENDER-SENSITIVE REPRESENTATION

What is the gender composition of the parliament and its leadership? Please provide responses in numbers.			
	Men	Women	Other
Members of Parliament			
Speaker/President			
Deputy Speaker/Deputy President			
Committee chairs			
Deputy chairs of committees			
Party leader/Leaders of party caucuses			
Deputy party leader/ Deputy leaders of party caucuses			
Secretary General/Clerk			
Other leadership positions, please specify:			

How are Committee Chairs chosen?	Please tick
Nominated and elected by the Committee	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nominated by the Government majority/ruling party and endorsed by the Committee	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other, specify:	

Please indicate if there are any formal rules requiring a minimum level of women's participation as Committee Chairs or Committee Members and, if so, what percentage this rule is set at.

	YES	NO	Percentage
Rule setting level of women's participation as Committee Members			
Rule setting level of women's participation as Committee Chairs			
Please elaborate on the rule, if it exists:			

What is the gender composition of parliamentary committees?

Name of committee	% Women	% Men	% Other
All Committees together			

Does the parliament monitor the participation rates of women and men parliamentarians in any of the following activities?

	YES	NO	If YES, what are the % for women:	Not applicable
Participation in debates on draft legislation				
Proposing amendments on draft legislation				
Proposing motions of censure or no confidence				
Proposing bills independently of the party ('private' bills)				
Asking questions (to government)				
Answering a question (as part of the government)				
If yes, please provide lesson learned or good practice:				

Do parliamentary sitting times accommodate the needs of parliamentarians with parental, family, or caring responsibilities? Tick all that apply.

	YES	NO	Debated but not adopted
Night sittings discontinued			
Sittings aligned with school calendar			
Longer periods in electorate/constituency (e.g., at least two weeks at a time)			
Other, please specify:			
If yes, please explain all that apply. Please also explain if proposed changes have been debated but not yet adopted:			

Have any measures been implemented to support the needs of parliamentarians in fulfilling their caring roles? Tick all that apply.

	YES	NO	Debated but not adopted
Childcare facilities provided in parliament			
Arrangements for breastfeeding mothers			
Proxy voting for parliamentarians with care responsibilities			
Flexible working hours			
Family room			
Financial assistance to parliamentarians for childcare			
Travel allowances for family members provided for commuting between constituency and parliament			
Other, please specify:			
If yes, please explain all that apply. Please also explain if proposed changes have been debated but not yet adopted:			

Does parliament have any of the following formal mechanisms to promote dignity and respect?

	YES	NO	Debated but not adopted
Code of conduct			
Policies on harassment and discrimination			
Confidential reporting of concerns about harassment and discrimination			

Other, please specify:

If yes, please explain all that apply. Please also explain if proposed changes have been debated but not yet adopted:

2. GENDER-SENSITIVE LAWMAKING

When considering proposed legislation or undertaking post-legislative scrutiny, does the parliament... Tick all that apply.			
	YES	NO	Sometimes
Have access to relevant sex-disaggregated data?			
Use a checklist or other practical tools for gender-sensitive legislative scrutiny?			
Require a gender impact statement or gender analysis of the draft law?			
Require the legislation to be written in gender-sensitive language?			
Provide opportunities to consult with relevant beneficiaries of the draft law?			
Ensure gender-balanced representation of key groups at public hearings?			
Require gender-equality issues to be reflected in the debate in the chamber?			
Monitor for compliance with international human rights and gender-equality standards, including CEDAW and other UN treaties, and if applicable standards from international organizations?			
Please provide concrete examples of good practice and lessons learned, but also of challenges or barriers:			

Does parliament incorporate sex-disaggregated data when ...			
Tick one out of three answers for all that apply.			
	Required by law	Optional/ discretionary	Never
Reviewing the budget? (including additional or urgent budgets)			
Reviewing draft legislation?			
Reviewing drafts of government policies and programmes?			
Please provide examples of good practice and lessons learned:			

When reviewing the budget, does parliament have... Tick all that apply.			
	YES	NO	Sometimes
Access to relevant sex-disaggregated data?			
Requirements for gender analysis and gender impact assessments?			

Please indicate below whether there is gender expertise in the following units and services of the parliament. Tick all that apply.	
	Gender equality experts present
The office of the Secretary General/Clerk	
Parliamentary research unit	
Parliamentary legal unit	
Parliamentary outreach (public affairs) unit	
Parliamentary training/capacity-building unit	
Broadcasting unit	
Information Technology unit	
Security unit	
Human Resources unit	
Other (please specify) :	
Please provide examples of good practice and lessons learned:	

Please indicate below the types of relationships parliament has with the following external sources of gender expertise. Please tick all that apply for each group.				
	Formal	Informal	In Person/ Oral	Written communication
Academic gender experts				
Women's civil society/ non-governmental organizations				
Other (please specify) :				

3. GENDER-SENSITIVE OVERSIGHT

Which, if any, of the following bodies does parliament have?	
Please tick as many that apply from the list below.	
A formal parliamentary women's caucus or network (funded by parliament)	
A formal women's (or gender equality) committee (funded by parliament)	

A formal multi-portfolio committee, in charge also of women's or gender-equality issues (funded by parliament)	
An informal parliamentary women's caucus or network	
A formal or informal group of male MPs advocating for gender equality	
None of the above	

Which of these bodies is MOST responsible for gender-sensitive oversight by the parliament? Please tick ONLY one.

A formal parliamentary women's caucus or network (funded by parliament)	
A formal women's (or gender-equality) committee (funded by parliament)	
A formal multi-portfolio committee, in charge also of women's or gender equality issues (funded by parliament)	
An informal parliamentary women's caucus or network	
A formal or informal group of male MPs advocating for gender equality	
All parliamentary bodies have this responsibility	
Please provide examples of good practice and lessons learned:	

If parliament has a formal women's caucus or a formal women's (or gender equality) committee, is it responsible for the following? Please tick all that apply.

	Women's caucus	Gender equality committee
Scrutinise the work ('outputs') of parliament, e.g., laws, budgets, representation		
Hold to account the responsible government minister/ department dealing with gender equality and women's issues		
Monitor and evaluate parliament as a gender-sensitive institution		
If other, please specify:		

For oversight activities is there

	YES	NO	Sometimes
Access to relevant sex-disaggregated data?			
Requirements for gender analysis and gender impact assessments?			

ANNEXE 2. MODEL SURVEY FOR MPS AND STAFF

Surveys often take the form of statements that can be ranked/rated. This helps collate responses. It is also possible to allow for some free text. These are particularly useful where one needs to understand the views of staff and MPs on specific issues or to gather suggestions. Where suggestions were made during a visit, there is an opportunity to test them out with a wider audience. Below is an example of a model survey for MPs and staff, which can run online and will not take longer than 15 minutes.

Please assess the following statements.

The scale goes from 1 – strongly disagree to 5 – strongly agree.

Gender-Sensitive Representation

- Women and men should both have at least 40% representation in parliament.
- Parliament needs to introduce representation targets for women and men in the parliamentary leadership.
- Parliament needs to introduce representation targets for women and men in the appointment of the committee chairs.
- A minimal representation of female and male MPs should be guaranteed for all committees.
- Parliament's conditions of work allow MPs to balance work and family obligations.
- Sexist language in parliament is part of the organizational culture.
- Female and male MPs should receive a gender equality induction course after every election.
- MPs treat parliamentary staff with respect, free of sexual harassment and gender-based discrimination.
- The parliament is recognized publicly as a central institution that promotes gender equality.
- Male and female staff have equal access to family-friendly working arrangements.
- Family caring responsibilities are a barrier for staff in undertaking certain roles in parliament.
- Family caring responsibilities are a barrier for staff in obtaining promotion.

Gender-Sensitive Lawmaking

- Gender considerations and sex-disaggregated data are not taken into account when reviewing the budget or new laws.
- Parliament needs to introduce obligatory gender impact assessments for draft legislation.

- The parliamentary service and parliamentary staff serve as a resource on gender equality.
- Parliament has good cooperation with women's civil society organizations and those working on gender equality and human rights.

Gender-Sensitive Oversight

- There is clear leadership in parliament on gender equality through a designated committee or women's caucus.
- Gender is mainstreamed into oversight activities such as questions and parliamentary debate.
- Parliament examines the budget from a gender perspective.
- There are effective links between parliament and women's civil society organizations.
- Parliament effectively monitors government compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

Free text questions

- What recommendations would you make to improve gender balance and overall gender equality in parliament?
- What recommendations would you make to improve gender balance among parliamentary staff?
- What recommendations would you make to ensure new legislation is gender-sensitive and does not perpetuate gender inequality or discrimination based on gender?
- Please add any other comments or ideas you might have.

ANNEXE 3. MODEL QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS DURING THE INCEPTION VISIT

GENDER-SENSITIVE REPRESENTATION	
Subject	Questions
Electing women to parliament	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What factors have enabled the election or appointment of women to parliament? • What mechanisms are in place or in the pipeline to ensure a certain numerical representation of women? • Is the current level of representation satisfactory? • What are the barriers hindering the election of more women to parliament? • How is harassment and violence against women in politics being addressed?
Leadership roles in parliament	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are positions of leadership allocated? • Are there measures to guarantee women's access to positions of leadership in parliament? If not, should they be adopted?
Participation in parliament	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are men and women represented on all committees? • On which committees are women mostly represented / under-represented? Are the stereotypes of women's & men's interests reinforced by committee membership? • Does parliament maintain sex-disaggregated information in terms of presence and participation? • Is there differential participation and if so, what are the reasons?
Caring responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does parliament support MPs and staff with caring responsibilities in any of the following ways? • Provision of child care facilities • Financial support • Working hours of parliament • Proxy voting or virtual participation
Dignity & respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there discriminatory and derogatory stereotypes about women in parliament? • Does the parliament have policies to ensure that as a workplace it is free of discrimination, sexism and harassment? • What measures are in place to ensure that all MPs and staff members are treated with dignity and respect? Are there codes of conduct, harassment and discrimination policies and mechanisms to enforce them effectively? • Do both men and women see gender equality as a matter that concerns them? • Do male parliamentarians take public stances on gender equality? • Do men and women get training opportunities, both MPs and staff, to learn about gender equality issues?

Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there disparities among parliamentary services or units in their gender composition? • What is the representation of both genders in the staff of parliament, including in leadership positions? • Do roles reflect gender stereotypical views of men and women? • Is there monitoring of the number of women who work in parliament and the leadership positions they hold? • Do the parliament's conditions of work allow staff to balance work and family obligations?
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GENDER-SENSITIVE REPRESENTATION

Specific questions to political parties

What steps have political parties taken to be gender-sensitive?

Subject	Questions
Women in the party	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a need to increase the number of women members? • Do the practices (such as meeting times, internal rules and processes) encourage women's participation? • Are there gender quotas in the governance structure of the party? • Do you collect any sex-disaggregated data? Can you share that?
Leadership roles in the party	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What steps are taken, if any, to increase the number of women in leadership positions?
Electing women to parliament	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What steps are taken, if any, to increase the number of women presenting themselves as candidates for elected office?
Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you develop policies on gender equality? • How prominent are gender equality issues in the political party platform?
Information to request from political parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political party documents: political party rules & procedures • Policy platforms and manifestos

GENDER-SENSITIVE LAWMAKING

Subject	Details
Gender sensitivity in lawmaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is sex-disaggregated data available and used? • Is there a checklist or other practical tool to assist in gender-sensitive scrutiny of legislation? • Is there a requirement for gender analysis and gender impact statements? • Do debates on legislation include issues of gender equality? • Are there consultations with beneficiaries of the law? • Is there a process to ensure compliance with human rights and gender equality standards?

Gender sensitivity in reviewing the budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is sex-disaggregated data available and used? • Is there a requirement for gender analysis and gender impact statements?
Expertise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is in-house gender expertise available to support the process of legislating? • What is the nature and diversity of relationships with external sources of gender expertise? Is expertise sourced from any of the following areas? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academia • Women's NGOs • Trade unions • The business community • Local government • National government

GENDER-SENSITIVE OVERSIGHT	
Subject	Details
Parliamentary bodies	<p>In its oversight activities in parliament, do any of the following bodies take the lead on issues of gender equality?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal women's caucuses • Informal women's caucuses • Formal gender equality committee • Formal human rights committee
Gender mainstreaming	<p>Is there evidence of gender mainstreaming by MPs and staff through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written and oral questions to government • Parliamentary debates • Public hearing processes or parliamentary debates on the reports of independent oversight officials such as an auditor-general or an ombudsperson • Committee inquiries and hearings <p>Additionally:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is gender equality mainstreamed in the budget? • Is attendance at committees by experts monitored by gender?
Gender equality as thematic priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does parliament have specific time allocated for questions and debates on gender equality? • Does parliament monitor whether gender equality is addressed in the work of committees, including monitoring participation rates and gender considerations in public hearings?

Expertise

- Do committees and MPs have access to in-house gender expertise for oversight activities?
- Are there effective links between Members, parliamentary staff and women's civil society organisations?

International obligations

What role does parliament play in monitoring the Government's compliance with international standards and norms, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)?

CONCLUDING QUESTIONS

As part of the discussions explore options for improving the gender sensitivity of parliament. Questions prompt reflection and help to prioritize actions. The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) [self-assessment toolkit](#) suggests three questions to wrap up each area of discussion. These are useful in seeking to identify where progress has been made and where there is a need to prioritize action.

- What is the biggest recent improvement made in this area?
- What is the most serious ongoing deficiency?
- What is to remedy this deficiency?

