

# GPECS II



## Global Project for Electoral Cycle Support II



### GENDER COMPONENT



June 2015

## Women's Participation Gender Mainstreaming Component

Inclusive elections, where all those eligible have the opportunity to vote to choose their elected representatives, are central to democracy. Ensuring that women and men can and do participate without unfair barriers is a core component of delivering an inclusive election. However, despite progress made in recent years, women continue to face obstacles to participate in political and electoral processes on equal basis with men. In many countries, for example, women's civic and political participation (as voters and candidates) is limited by numerous factors related to women's roles and social status, including insecurity, illiteracy, women's domestic burden, pressures to proxy vote, and women's lack of citizenship rights – all of which require special consideration through the process of electoral administration and in the electoral law.

Since its creation in 2009, GPECS has been particularly successful in mainstreaming gender in UNDP electoral projects and in increasing knowledge and programming practices on women's electoral participation through advisory services, capacity building measures and tools, and through the development of knowledge products. Furthermore, GPECS advisors have contributed significantly to the development of UN policy in the area of women's political participation. The UNDP Independent Thematic Evaluation pointed out that *"the establishment of GPECS provided UNDP with a mechanism to more systematically promote the empowerment of women throughout the electoral cycle"*. UNDP's Gender Steering and Implementation Committee, chaired by the UNDP Associate Administrator, has also praised the GPECS Gender Component as a *"programme yielding returns for women on the ground."*

**GPECS Phase II** builds from these achievements and lessons learned from the original project and focuses on mainstreaming gender throughout the activities of GPECS' Global, Regional and National component and UNDP's electoral assistance more generally. Phase II will concentrate its efforts on the following outputs:

### 1. Knowledge Development and Policy Dialogue on Gender and Elections

Building up a body of knowledge to address the constraints faced by women as voters, candidates and electoral administrators, and to stimulate policy dialogue on these issues. Indicative activities include:

- Research and policy dialogue on specific constraints facing women's political participation, such as time burdens, intimidation, restrictions on physical access, illiteracy, media coverage, traditional views of appropriate gender roles and building up a databank on best practices in overcoming these challenges.
- Further policy dialogue on specific constraints and strategies to encourage women to come forward as candidates and how electoral laws, political finance, political party laws and electoral administration can affect women's involvement.
- Guidance to EMBs on best practices in the collection and maintenance of essential data/statistics on gender. Availability of accurate data/statistics on women in elections is a commonly recognized weakness in this area. Comparative experiences and best practices could help encourage EMBs to ensure accurate data is available.
- Research and policy dialogue on the specific constraints and opportunities faced in post-conflict



settings with particular emphasis on 'entry points' for affecting change.<sup>1</sup> There is also need for additional research on the best practices in bringing out the women's vote in post-conflict settings. The fluidity of post-conflict environments – despite all threats to women's political engagement – presents unique opportunities for improving women's political participation since constitutions are often being redrafted, electoral and other relevant laws are reviewed and affirmative measures and international assistance can be harnessed to the benefit of women.

All research and policy will draw on the data available on the ACE Electoral Knowledge Network website and the iKNOW Politics website for global dissemination. Through these activities, technical resources and country-level expertise will be identified to support regional and country-level interventions.

## 2. Quick Intervention Fund (QIF) for Women's Participation in Post-Conflict Settings and Countries in Transition

A successful innovation from Phase I, the QIF will continue to support specific opportunities for women to influence debates on constitutional and other legal reforms affecting women's political participation. The fund was created in order to be easily accessible by women's organizations, or women's political party caucuses, etc., via UNDP Country Offices, and in association, where appropriate, with gender advisors within DPKO peacekeeping or DPA special political missions. The purpose of the fund is to enable women to organize themselves to affect change, to learn lessons from other experience and to sustain their participation throughout a transitional cycle.

## 3. National-level Gender Activities and Advisory Services

This output of the component will ensure that gender advisory services are available to support all national

projects. It will also provide funding to directly support the recruitment of gender expertise within national electoral bodies, (if requested). Finally, specific resources will be devoted to national-level activities aimed at strengthening the capacity of women to participate in elections and electoral reforms. These include but are not limited to:

- Train members/commissioners, and staff, of EMBs in gender analysis, and, specifically, on issues related to gender equality, inclusion and electoral administration;
- Audit/assess numbers and levels of female staff in EMBs and promote balancing measures;
- Integrate gender equality into training programmes of short-term electoral workers;
- Promote addressing gender equality concerns in debates regarding electoral reform;
- Promote electoral systems that uphold principals of pluralism and inclusiveness and implementation of Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820;<sup>2</sup>
- Provide opportunities for political parties' to improve their understanding of human rights and international law frameworks and commitments their countries have made in these respects;
- Develop political parties' capacities to craft gender-sensitive political platforms, engage women voters and promote women's leadership within the party structures;
- Provide examples of ways that affirmative measures address gender inequality;
- Support research and national dialogues on factors impeding women's civic/political participation to feed into regional and global knowledge creation;
- Network with women's groups and allies in the political arena as a way to draw on and share experiences across countries on topics such as positive measures;
- Support programmes for civic and voter education to target women's political participation.

<sup>1</sup> These include factors such as, for example, volatile security environments, the breakdown of infrastructure which limits their access to information and to voting locations, as well as the increased workload created by a rise in the number of female-headed households.

<sup>2</sup> In line the Focal Point's December 2013 Policy Directive on "Promoting women's electoral and political participation through UN electoral assistance.