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INDEPENDENT NATIONAL ELECTORAL COMMISSION GENDER POLICY



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FOREWORD

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is committed to providing a level playing field for all stakeholders in the delivery of credible elections. INEC recognizes the electorate; men and women voters, hold the key to the enthronement of the will of the people in any democracy.

Prof. Attahiru Jega, INEC Chairman (2011)

The issue of gender equality and access has remained on the front burner of the Commission's engagement, both at the on-going institutional reform level and interactions with stakeholders in the electoral process.

The Commission's endorsement of the Framework for Implementation of at least 35% Affirmative Action; on Women's Political Advancement and Representation in Democratic Governance in Nigeria, eloquently affirms its commitment to gender equality.

The recent elevation of the Gender Division, from the status of a Unit to a Division aptly demonstrates the willingness of the Commission to go beyond rhetoric to

action. As a Division, it is now better positioned to drive the process of the Commission's strategic intervention in opening up the political space for participation by our women folk.

The INEC Gender Policy further demonstrates the Commission's commitment to sustainable and inclusive participation of all, irrespective of gender, both within the Commission and in the wider political system.

The Policy aims to achieve gender balance and access to all cadres of staff of the Commission, as well as providing a strategic platform and champions engendering a more inclusive political process.

The processes leading to the Policy drew inspiration from the National Gender policy, as well as all the International Protocols and Conventions to which Nigeria is a signatory. More specifically, the Policy is modeled after the Nigerian National Gender Policy (2006), which states that Gender equality and women's empowerment are basic human rights that lie at the heart of equitable development. Nigeria is committed to fostering a healthy respect for all persons irrespective of race, class, disability and gender. Women's empowerment is a viable tool for eradicating poverty and advancing sustainable development and democracy. This INEC Gender Policy is concerned with mobilizing the resources of INEC towards attaining its Constitutional mandate. The Policy will contribute to meeting the National Gender Policy goal through the

application of its processes and resources within the electoral system.

The INEC Gender Policy is also one of the many good fruits of the productive interface between the Commission and our Development Partner, UNDP-DGD who provided technical support for the successful realization of the policy document.

We as a Commission affirm and commit to ensure that the objective of gender equality will remain constant. The Commission also affirms to ensure flexibility and openness to respond to new and innovative methods. It will also pursue opportunities for supporting gender equality during implementation; and broad participation of women in the implementation of the policy.

The Commission further commits to implementing this policy with vigour and creativity, particularly in holding itself to account as the lead agency.

Finally efforts will be made in paving the way for all stakeholders to play active roles in seeing to the realization of the noble objectives of the policy.

Professor Attahiru M. Jega, OFR

Chairman, INEC

November, 2014.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Painstaking efforts were made in the development of the INEC Gender Policy which was a strategic response to addressing gender inequality from the point of view of the Commission as an Election Management Body.

The Commission is greatly indebted to many people, Organizations and Institutions whose contributions and unwavering support in very many respects have brought this document to fruition.

Special appreciation also goes to the United Nations Development Programme-Democratic Governance for Development Project (UNDP-DGD), a joint donor basket fund with contributions from the European Union, UKaid, Department for Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, Canada and UNDP. We sincerely appreciate the support, input and encouragement of UNDP-DGD Project Director, Dr. Mourtada Deme and National Election Expert, Prof. Bolade Eyinla. Also the technical input of DGD Gender Expert, Mrs. Mufuliat Fijabi, Anne Ikpeme and other staff of the DGD project are very well appreciated.

Our appreciation also goes to the Gender Experts from

the Civil Society Organizations around the country who participated in the development and validation of this policy particularly; Hajia Saudatu Mahdi, Prof. Joy Ezeilo, Hajia Amina Salihu, Hajia Rabia H. A. Eshak, Prof. Pam Sha, Prof. Irene Agunloye, Mrs. Felicia Onibon, Mrs Oby Nwankwo, Mrs. Wunmi Asubiaro-Dada, Dr. Lydia Umar, Chief Bisi Olateru-Olagbegi, Hajia Rabi Abdullahi and Mrs. Ayisha Osori.

The inputs and contributions sought and received from the Resident Electoral Commissioners (RECs) of the thirty six States and the FCT, the Secretary to the Commission, Directors, Administrative Secretaries, Heads of Departments, Directorates, Divisions and Units as well as Gender Desk Officers nationwide were indeed invaluable.

We particularly appreciate Mr. Oluwole Osaze-Uzzi, Director, Voter Education, Publicity, Gender and Civil Society Organizations Liaison Department for providing co-ordination in the processes of berthing the document and Mrs. Blessing Obidegwu, Deputy Director Gender Division, for her diligence and commitment in driving the processes that have yielded the final document. All the staff of the Gender Division of the department are also appreciated for their hard work.

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Kuna, Special Adviser to the Hon. Chairman are worthy of mention.

The Commission's profound gratitude goes particularly to members of the Information and Publicity Committee, Dr. Chris O. Iyimoga, Dr. Ishmael I. Igbani, Dame Gladys Nne Nwafor, Engr. (Dr.) Nuru Yakubu, OON and (Amb.) Mohammad Ahmad Wali, other National Commissioners including Hajia Amina Bala Zakari who provided a lot of encouragement and contributed immensely in offering insights and suggestions which assisted in the production of the final document.

Finally, all these efforts would have yielded little or no results without the ultimate support and encouragement of the Chairman of the Commission, Professor Attahiru M. Jega, OFR. To him therefore we say thank you very much.

The list is indeed inexhaustible. We however, wish to use this medium to also express our appreciation to everyone who in one way or the other contributed to the realization of this final document.

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GENDER POLICY

INTRODUCTION

The Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC) Gender Policy is a response to the National Gender Policy (2006) and Vision 20:20 (2009) which recognize that gender equality and women's empowerment are basic human rights that lie at the heart of equitable development and which call on all state and non-state actors to promote gender equality through their institutional practices and policies.

As a state actor, the Commission is committed to addressing gender gaps within it, and also promoting a gender responsive electoral process. This is in accordance with equity, which is one of its core values and which demands that it maintains fairness and justice in dealing with all its stakeholders.

In the development of the Gender Policy, a wide range of consultations with key personnel of INEC at different

levels including Resident Electoral Commissioners, Directors, Administrative Secretaries Gender Desk Officers from the 36 States and the FCT as well as other staff were carried out. The outcome of these engagements, added value not only to the development of the Policy, but also for gender awareness and mainstreaming in the Commission.

Consultations were held with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), women leaders of political parties, as well as representatives of political parties under the umbrella of the Inter Party Advisory Council (IPAC).

POLICY CONTEXT

In addition to the domestic legal imperatives, including the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) which specifically prohibits discrimination on the ground of sex, and the Electoral Act 2010 (as amended), INEC's Gender Policy is also informed by the International and Regional obligations to which Nigeria is a signatory. These instruments include: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR); the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR); International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR); Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); International Covenant on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (ICRPWD); African Charter on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR); Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa; African Union Solemn Declaration on Gender

;Equality in Africa; the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015 (PoA); the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) and the United Nations Resolution 1325.

The policy is further informed by the historic disadvantage faced by women in Nigeria in civil, political, social, economic and cultural spheres; and the recognition of the direct correlation between the condition and position of women in the country and the level of its national development. These disadvantages can be traced to a number of factors, including general apathy to politics amongst women premised on religious and cultural bias, absence of regular civic and voter education, lack of resources to compete with men, low membership in political parties, as well as challenges around personal security and violence. The culmination of these factors explain the poor performance of women in elections since Nigeria's return to democracy in 1999.

The central task of the Commission is not limited to the conduct of elections, but also the deepening of the democratic process in Nigeria by promoting sound democratic knowledge. Part of the effort has been to ensure the participation of marginalized and disadvantaged groups across the country.

This policy therefore seeks to encourage and expand the participation of all in the political and electoral spaces. It demonstrates the Commission's commitment to the goal of deepening Nigeria's democratic experience by outlining measures that can collectively be taken to ensure that the participation of nearly half of the population of the country in its affairs is broadened.

RATIONALE FOR THE POLICY

There is a strong will to mainstream gender concerns in the work of the Commission by establishing a clear vision in respect of delivering its services, policies, procedures and practices on equality between men and women. This is premised on the assumption that a gender responsive electoral management body will facilitate an electoral process which will impact on the governance structures emerging from elections.

The various analyses of gender and women's political participation in Nigeria's political process has shown poor representation of women in decision making positions, whether appointive or elective. This is further compounded by the patriarchal nature of the society, the gender roles and stereotypes that limit women and girls' capacities and capabilities and the opportunities open to them.

This policy contributes to the ultimate goal of the National Gender Policy (2006) that seeks to:

“... build a just society devoid of discrimination, harness the full potentials of all social groups regardless of sex or circumstances, promote the enjoyment of fundamental human rights and protect the health, social, economic and political well-being of all citizens in order to achieve equitable rapid economic growth; evolve an evidence-based planning and governance system where human, social, financial and technological resources are efficiently and effectively deployed for sustainable development.”

The INEC Gender Policy therefore seeks to contribute to strengthening gender equality in the Commission and its relationship with other stakeholders by giving due attention to gender considerations and promoting equity and equality between women and men in the electoral process. This is in consonance with the Commission's core values and guiding principles.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- a. The INEC Gender Policy is derived from the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended), the Electoral Act 2010 (as amended), and International treaties to which Nigeria is a party and/or signatory;
- b. based on the Commission's mission to serve as an independent and effective Election Management Body committed to the conduct of free, fair and credible elections for sustainable democracy in Nigeria;
- c. advances the aspirations contained in the National Gender Policy, its intent being to contribute to building a just society devoid of discrimination while at the same time harnessing the full potentials of all social groups regardless of sex or circumstance;

- d. intends to establish a framework for gender-responsiveness in all electoral processes and encourages the strengthening of capacities of stakeholders to deliver components of this mandate as a pre-requisite for an efficient Electoral Management Body on which other criteria are based;
- e. builds on the hopes and aspirations of Nigerians for a truly inclusive, equitable, free and fair electoral process and the commitment of the Commission, its leadership, management and personnel to deliver on an independent, effective and gender responsive, transparent and accountable electoral process;
- f. envisages that the Commission will uphold and give the required political and technical impetus needed for its implementation including appropriate financing and to move to institute the Policy as being central to all other policies, structure, personnel and working modalities of the Commission. Hence all policies, structures, practices and institutional activities of the Commission shall be periodically reviewed for their gendered implications;

- g. acknowledges the roles of stakeholders as critical in supporting the Commission to attain success;
- h. enjoins the Commission to encourage and establish collaborative frameworks to harness the support of all internal and external stakeholders in their adherence to the gender policy provisions; and
- i. recognizes responsibility to women and men as heterogeneous groups based on which the Commission will provide for the various indices of diversity (including cultural, religious, and social) amongst others.

POLICY OBJECTIVES

INEC has identified four policy implementation objectives based on the overall goal that reflects its institutional responsibilities and roles under its regulatory mandate with regards to the broader electoral environment:-

- a. Ensuring that INEC policies, plans, processes and operations are gender responsive;
- b. Encouraging gender equity and balance within political parties especially in the identification of candidates in line with the provisions of their statutes.
- c. Increasing budgetary provision and mobilizing partners to effectively provide funding for gender sensitive actions within their purview.
- d. Supporting an enabling legislative environment to achieve gender equality and bridging gaps in political representation in elective posts at all electoral levels.

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

A framework has been developed to ensure effective implementation of the policy. A key lesson from the review of the National Gender Policy (2006) is that an enabling environment is a pre-requisite for the implementation of a gender policy. The enabling environment is the overall formal and informal frameworks within which gender equality and women's empowerment can be achieved.

The key assumptions in developing the implementation framework for the INEC Gender policy are that strategic partnerships and leadership commitment as well as the availability of capacity and resources are key to the success of the policy.

An enabling environment exists within the Commission for the development and implementation of an institutional gender policy. This is in line with INEC's

Strategic Action Plan (2012 - 2016).

The implementation framework is a mechanism that allows INEC as a duty bearer to keep results and targets in view, anticipate and plan for resources required to deliver the targets and to track what has been achieved, or not, and to review the situation. INEC proposes to undertake periodic reviews within every four year interval. That way, lessons can be taken forward into the design of further interventions in the policy, thus creating a sustainable pathway for the effective implementation of an active gender policy.

TOWARDS THE REALIZATION OF THE GENDER POLICY

The gender policy is aimed at mainstreaming gender into all the Commission's policies and programmes. This will be accomplished by establishing a clear vision around service delivery and adherence to procedures and practices, especially in the area of promoting gender balance across the various cadres of its personnel, based on equality between men and women. Externally, INEC will advocate for the enabling legislative environment and the adoption of relevant institutional measures and mechanisms towards the achievement of impartiality and equality through bridging gender gaps in political representation at all related levels especially in elective and appointive positions.

In pursuit of these objectives, INEC will provide the necessary leadership and operational support for the effective implementation of the gender policy. This will be

done by establishing internal structures and mechanisms to facilitate implementation of the gender policy including mainstreaming gender into its overall strategy as well as into the goals of all departments, directorates, divisions and units. The implementation and attainment level of the Work Plan on gender policy will be monitored against specific milestones and timelines. Such monitoring shall be coordinated by the Commission's Gender Division.

INEC'S COMMITMENT

The Commission will uphold and give the required leadership, and operational impetus for the implementation of its Gender Policy, including the institutionalization of the policy in the organizational structure and machinery of the Commission. In effect, all policies, plans, structure, practices and institutional activities of the Commission shall be periodically reviewed for their gendered implications.

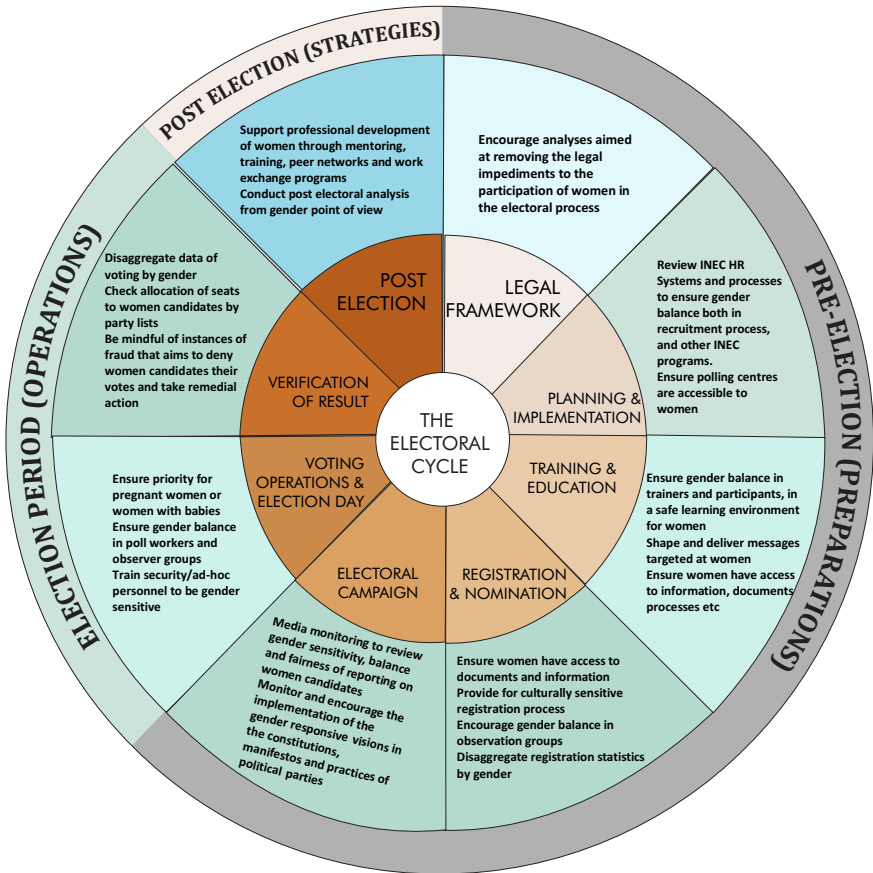
The Commission acknowledges the roles of stakeholders and will encourage adherence to the policy and support for the processes from all stakeholders. Gender responsiveness in the Commission will recognize and respect cultural, religious and social diversity. The Commission shall ensure budgetary allocation for the operationalization of the Gender Policy.

CONCLUSION

The INEC Gender Policy will contribute to closing the gender gaps within INEC and encourage change in the response of other stakeholders in the electoral process. Based on the commitment of the Commission, the policy was developed after extensive consultations with relevant stakeholders.

The policy responds to the internal needs of INEC on closing the gender gaps through four (4) identifiable policy objectives. It also spells out external areas where the Commission can use its position to encourage change to make the electoral process more gender responsive. Apart from drawing its inspiration from the National Gender Policy (2006), the Policy is also a sectoral response to the National Gender Policy which calls on all state and non-state actors to take action on ensuring gender responsiveness in Nigeria.

ELECTORAL CYCLE



Adapted from the Electoral Cycle developed by International IDEA and European Commission



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