



**WEST AFRICA NETWORK
FOR PEACEBUILDING**

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS FOR PEACE



Gender **CONNECT**



THE EFFECTIVENESS OF
QUOTA & PARITY LAWS
IN ADVANCING WOMEN'S
POLITICAL PARTICIPATION:
CASES OF CÔTE D'IVOIRE,
GUINEA & GUINEA-BISSAU



**WEST AFRICA NETWORK
FOR PEACEBUILDING**

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS FOR PEACE

Gender **CONNECT**

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF
QUOTA & PARITY LAWS
IN ADVANCING WOMEN'S
POLITICAL PARTICIPATION:
CASES OF CÔTE D'IVOIRE,
GUINEA, & GUINEA-BISSAU

GENDER CONNECT No.1 SEPTEMBER 2025

The Effectiveness of Quota and Parity Laws in Advancing Women's Political Participation: Cases of Côte D'Ivoire, Guinea and Guinea-Bissau.

Introduction

Adopted in October 2000, United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325,¹ along with subsequent related resolutions, marked a pivotal moment in acknowledging the crucial role of women in conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and political processes at both national and local levels. In translating these commitments into practice, many states in West Africa have implemented special measures, such as gender quotas and gender parity systems, to enhance women's participation in peace processes and democratic governance. For instance, Guinea-Bissau passed a law in 2018, mandating a minimum quota of 36% female representation in both elected and appointed positions.² Similarly, in 2019, the Republic of Guinea also adopted a parity law requiring that women make up 50% of all electoral lists.³ That same year, Côte d'Ivoire enacted legislation establishing a minimum quota of 30% women on candidate lists.⁴ The adoption of these legal frameworks demonstrates a regional commitment to strengthening women's political participation.

However, questions remain regarding the effective implementation of these measures and their impact on advancing women's leadership and representation within decision-making bodies. What insights do the experiences of Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, and Guinea-Bissau offer in terms of achievements, ongoing challenges, and the strategies needed to ensure more meaningful and sustained representation of women in politics?

This edition of Gender Connect⁵ seeks to address the aforementioned question, drawing on insights from the Gender Talk Series⁶ held on June 30, 2025, under the theme: Women's Leadership and Political Participation in West Africa. In addition, relevant literature was reviewed to complement and enrich the discussions.

¹ UN Security Council (2000). Resolution 1325. <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n00/720/18/pdf/n0072018.pdf>

² United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (2018). Guinea-Bissau Parliament passes law to ensure gender balanced political representation. <https://uniogbis.unmissions.org/en/guinea-bissau-parliament-passes-law-ensure-gender-balanced-political-representation>

³ UN Women (2019). Guinea adopts Law on Parity, securing equal representation of women on electoral lists. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2019/5/news-guinea-adopts-law-on-parity>

⁴ Law N° 2019-870 of October 14, 2019. <https://landwise-production.s3.us-west-2.amazonaws.com/2022/05/Cote-dIvoire-2019-870.pdf>

⁵ "Gender Connect" is the electronic publication of WANEP's Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. It addresses emerging WPS issues in West Africa by providing in-depth analysis to guide public policies towards gender-responsive peace and governance processes

⁶ Virtual discussion platform created by WANEP in 2022 to discuss peace and security issues from a gender perspective that takes into account the specific needs of men and women in conflict prevention and management efforts.

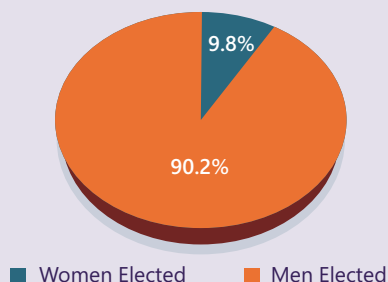


Blogs World Bank

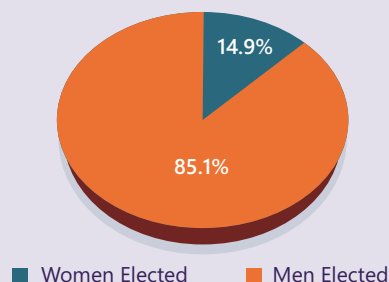
Quota and Parity Laws: From Rhetoric to Practice

Quota and parity laws are widely recognized as important mechanisms for promoting women's leadership and ensuring inclusive political participation. However, their effectiveness has been limited due to weak implementation and enforcement. A key challenge lies in the absence of binding provisions or the failure to apply sanctions when laws are violated; issues that significantly undermine the intended impact of these legal frameworks. Experience has shown that even when penalties for non-compliance exist, enforcement is often lax. Political parties frequently submit candidate lists that fail to meet quota or parity requirements yet face little to no consequence. This continued impunity has proven to be a major obstacle to women's access to decision-making positions.

Representation of Women
in the 2023 Legislative Elections
in Guinea Bissau



Representation of Women
in the 2020 Legislative Elections
in Guinea



The Effectiveness of Quota and Parity Laws in Advancing Women's Political Participation: Cases of Côte D'Ivoire, Guinea and Guinea-Bissau.

Guinea-Bissau presents a clear example. Despite a 2018 law mandating a minimum 36% female representation in elected and appointed positions and provisions for sanctions such as the reduction of public campaign subsidies or withdrawal of tax exemptions, compliance remains low.⁷ In the 2023 legislative elections, only 10 women were elected to the 102-seat parliament, representing just 9.8%, well below the legal threshold of 36%.⁸ Similarly, in the Republic of Guinea, where a parity law was adopted in 2019, with sanctions for non-compliance, the 2020 legislative elections saw only 17 women elected out of 114 seats, yielding a mere 14.9% representation.⁹ This is far from the parity target and underscores the gap between legislation and implementation.

In contrast, Côte d'Ivoire offers a more encouraging example of how political will and institutional accountability can drive compliance. In the lead-up to the September 2023 local elections, authorities strictly enforced the 2019 quota law requiring at least 30% female representation on candidate lists. Political parties that failed to meet this requirement faced the risk of disqualification. As a result, 11,892 women were registered as candidates out of a total of 35,302, representing 33.67% overall, including 33.97% in municipal elections and 32.07% in regional elections;¹⁰ surpassing the legal quota of 30% female representation. Moreover, women's representation translated into electoral success, with women securing 1670 out of 5225 seats for regional councils, making 31.96% and 10235 out of 30084 seats for municipal councils, making 34.02%.¹¹

Several factors contributed to this outcome. One of the most significant was the establishment of institutional oversight mechanisms. The National Observatory for Equity and Gender (ONEG),¹² created in 2019, played a key role in monitoring compliance with the quota law. Working in coordination with the Electoral Commission and other state institutions, ONEG helped ensure political parties respected the minimum threshold. This model draws inspiration from Senegal's experience, where the creation of the National Parity Observatory in 2011¹³ has been instrumental in enforcing parity legislation. As a result, Senegal now ranks among the leading West African countries for women's representation in parliament, second only to Cape Verde.

⁷ Dr. Lassane Ouedraogo and Pelumi Obisesan-Aina (2023). Will the legislative elections guarantee a return to political stability in Guinea Bissau? <https://www.cddwestafrica.org/blog/will-the-legislative-elections-guarantee-a-return-to-political-stability-in-guinea-bissau/>

⁸ IPU Parline (2023). Global Data on National Parliaments, Guinea Bissau. <https://data.ipu.org/fr/parliament/GW/GW-LC01/election/GW-LC01-E20230604/>

⁹ IPU Parline (2020). Global Data on National Parliaments, Guinea. <https://data.ipu.org/parliament/GN/GN-LC01/election/GN-LC01-E20200322/>

¹⁰ Tristan Sahi (2023). Elections locales 2023, 11 892 femmes candidates enregistrées sur 35 302. <https://www.7info.ci/elections-locales-2023-11-892-femmes-candidates-enregistrees-sur-35-302/>

¹¹ Commission Electorale Indépendante (2023). Statistiques des Candidat-e-s et des Elu-e-s par Sexe. https://cei.ci/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/STAT_CAND_ELU_E_S_2023_V4.pdf

¹² FAAPA (2019). Côte d'Ivoire / Un Observatoire pour promouvoir l'équité et d'égalité entre les hommes et les femmes. <https://www.faapa.info/en/cote-divoire-un-observatoire-pour-promouvoir-lequite-et-degalite-entre-les-hommes-et-les-femmes/>

¹³ Observatoire National de la Parité (2011). <https://www.onp.gouv.sn/>

The case of Côte d'Ivoire shows that the effectiveness of gender quota and parity laws largely depends on the presence of strong political will and the rigorous enforcement of legal provisions. When applied consistently and supported by institutional accountability mechanisms, these laws can yield tangible results. But to move beyond symbolic inclusion, such measures must also be accompanied by efforts to ensure that women in politics have real influence on public policies and governance outcomes, particularly those that advance gender equality.

The Imperative of Quality Representation

While quota and parity systems have undeniably facilitated greater inclusion of women in decision-making bodies, their implementation should not be viewed as an end in itself. Rather, these mechanisms must be understood as strategic tools aimed at achieving substantive gender equality. To date, national efforts have largely focused on increasing the numerical representation of women, an important and necessary step, but one that remains insufficient on its own.

The true challenge lies in moving beyond symbolic representation toward meaningful, influential, and qualitatively strong participation. Women elected to public office or appointed to decision-making positions must be empowered not only to hold seats, but to shape decisions, influence legislative and policy agendas, and address the structural inequalities that continue to limit women's full enjoyment of their rights.

Achieving this level of influence requires a diverse range of profiles and competencies among women leaders. Given the complex, multi-dimensional nature of gender inequalities, spanning political, economic, social, and security spheres, a plurality of skills is essential. Such diversity enables women representatives to engage effectively across various committees and technical bodies, contributing to the formulation and implementation of public policies that are gender-responsive and inclusive.

The Effectiveness of Quota and Parity Laws in Advancing Women's Political Participation: Cases of Côte D'Ivoire, Guinea and Guinea-Bissau.

Opportunities to Leverage Quota and Parity Laws in Upcoming Elections in Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, and Guinea-Bissau

The upcoming elections in Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, and Guinea-Bissau present an opportunity to enforce quotas and parity laws to enhance women's political participation.

In **Côte d'Ivoire**, 7 women, representing 11.67% of the total, are among the 60 candidates who have submitted their candidacies for the October 2025 presidential election.¹⁴ While this figure falls short of the quota target of 30%, it reflects a modest improvement compared to the 2020 presidential election, where only 3 out of 44 candidates (6.8%) were women.¹⁵ Although the current context may not offer immediate opportunities to increase the number of women candidates, there are still other entry points for applying the quota law that civil society organizations can leverage, particularly in relation to the composition of electoral staff in polling stations and the list of observers.

During the 2020 elections, the WANEP's Women's Situation Room (Women's Electoral Security Observation Centre - WESOC) noted in the majority of polling stations observed that the 3 agents provided for by the legal framework as polling station staff were men.¹⁶ Women were in the minority in most polling stations. The same observation was made in the security sector. Only 20% of women were counted among security agents in the 352 polling stations in which the presence of security agents was observed.¹⁷ Also, among the observers encountered in 57.03% of the stations covered by WANEP's team, 26.78% were women.¹⁸ This observation demonstrates the need to continue advocacy efforts for compliance with the quota law in order to improve the representation of women at these different levels of responsibility during the 2025 presidential election in Côte d'Ivoire.

Additionally, there is a need to take actions for a more peaceful and enabling environment that allows women to fully exercise their civic and political rights, through

¹⁴ APA-Abidjan (2025). Présentielle ivoirienne : la CEI a reçu 60 candidatures. <https://fr.apanews.net/cote-divoire/presidentielle-ivoirienne-la-cei-a-recu-60-candidatures/>

¹⁵ Lassaad Ben Ahmed (2020). Côte d'Ivoire/Présentielle : 44 candidatures déposées à la commission électorale. <https://www.aa.com.tr/fr/afrique/c%C3%B4te-d-ivoire-pr%C3%A9sentielle-44-candidatures-d%C3%A9pos%C3%A9es-%C3%A0-la-commission-%C3%A9lectorale-/1962426>

¹⁶ WANEP Regional (2020). WANEP-ECOWAS-UNPD Preliminary Declaration of 2020 Cote d'Ivoire Presidential Elections, WESOC. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=REzOpJvGfXY>

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ Ibid

policy dialogue and community sensitization. Civil society organisations in Côte d'Ivoire need to engage beyond the elections, particularly in the post-election phase, to advocate for the enforcement of the 30% quota for women's representation in the formation of the new government and other appointed positions. Furthermore, continued support will be crucial to ensure that women not only access these positions but are empowered to lead effectively, thereby contributing to long-term gender equality outcomes.



Cross-section of WESOC (COSEF) members during the 2020 election in Côte d'Ivoire

Guinea-Bissau: November 23, 2025, marks the official date for the upcoming presidential and legislative elections in Guinea Bissau. This election presents an opportunity to reverse the decline in women's political participation. Despite the adoption of the 2018 quota law mandating 36% female representation in decision-making positions, women's participation in parliament has declined from 13,7%¹⁹ in 2019 to 9,8% in 2023.²⁰ The immediate challenge lies not only in preserving the existing gains, but also in implementing effective strategies to reverse this downward trend and move toward the legal quota of 36%. This necessitates a critical assessment of the structural and political barriers that have undermined previous efforts, to consider concrete actions to improve the results in upcoming elections. Moreover, the fact that political parties have not yet submitted their candidate lists presents an opportunity to advocate and lobby for the effective enforcement of the quota law, drawing inspiration from countries like Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire, which have implemented concrete strategies to ensure compliance.

¹⁹ IPU Parline (2019). Global Data on National Parliaments, Guinea Bissau. <https://data.ipu.org/parliament/GW/GW-LC01/election/GW-LC01-E20190310/>

²⁰ IPU Parline (2023). Global Data on National Parliaments, Guinea Bissau. <https://data.ipu.org/fr/parliament/GW/GW-LC01/election/GW-LC01-E20230604/>

The Effectiveness of Quota and Parity Laws in Advancing Women's Political Participation: Cases of Côte D'ivoire, Guinea and Guinea-Bissau.

Guinea: The country is at a crucial turning point in its political transition, with a constitutional referendum scheduled for September 2025. This moment offers a strategic opportunity to embed gender inclusion into the country's democratic reforms and ensure that women's voices are not sidelined in national debates. Civic education and awareness-raising, particularly at the local level, are essential to encourage informed participation and promote democratic engagement among women. Special attention should be paid to building women's capacity to contribute meaningfully to the ongoing transition and to advocate for reforms that reflect their priorities and rights.

A major feature of the proposed constitutional revision is the introduction of independent candidacies, a potential game-changer in a political system historically dominated by party structures. This could be justified by the fact that independent candidacy could serve as an alternative pathway for women, offering them a chance to bypass the gatekeeping mechanisms of political parties, which often limit their emergence and advancement in politics. This provision, in addition to the gender parity law could open new political space for women and foster their political participation.

Conclusion

Women's leadership and political participation are essential for consolidating democracy, advancing peacebuilding, and achieving sustainable development in West Africa. While quota and parity systems have proven effective in increasing women's political representation, their consistent enforcement is crucial to translate commitments of States into concrete actions that lead to lasting progress toward gender equality. This is evident in countries such as Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, and Guinea-Bissau. However, these mechanisms alone are not sufficient. Efforts must be complemented by addressing the deep-rooted socio-cultural, institutional, and economic barriers that continue to hinder women's leadership and full participation in the political sphere across the region. The role of civil society in this context becomes pivotal in fostering an environment where women are not only represented in political spaces but are fully empowered to lead, influence policy, and drive transformative governance across the region.

The Effectiveness of Quota and Parity Laws in Advancing Women's Political Participation: Cases of Côte D'Ivoire, Guinea and Guinea-Bissau.

Authors

Denise Cabral dos Santos Indequé

*National Network Coordinator,
WANEP Guinea-Bissau*



Jean Marc Hovi

*National Network Coordinator,
WANEP Côte d'Ivoire*

Lucie Koly Hebelamou

*National Network Coordinator,
WANEP Guinea*



Josiane Sombo

*Regional Coordinator, Women,
Peace and Security, WANEP Regional*



Gender CONNECT

Disclaimer

The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and not necessarily those of WANEP. While every attempt has been made to ensure that the information published is accurate, no responsibility or liability is accepted for any loss, damage or disruptions caused by errors or omissions whether such errors or omissions result from negligence, or any other cause.

West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP)

Trinity Avenue, Off Mile 7 Road, Achimota, Accra

P. O. Box CT4434, Cantonments, Accra-Ghana

Tel: +233 302 411638 | 302 406340 | 302 426004 | 302 408224

Email: wanep@wanep.org | Website: www.wanep.org