



INDEPENDENT NATIONAL
ELECTORAL COMMISSION



INEC GENDER POLICY

2021 - 2025

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Foreword

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) recognizes the importance of mainstreaming gender considerations across all areas of its activities. In keeping with its vision to be one of the best Election Management Bodies in the world, the Commission adopted the INEC Gender Policy (IGP) in 2014 committing to taking a gender-sensitive approach in its operations and processes.

In developing the IGP, the Commission took cognizance of the National Gender Policy of 2006 as well as the strategic objectives of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and other international treaties that made explicit commitments to gender equality to which Nigeria is a signatory.

Following the adoption of the INEC Gender Policy (IGP) in 2014, the Commission progressively embarked on the application of gender perspectives in its internal policies, plans, and operations. Furthermore, the Commission pursued the implementation of gender equity principles in all electoral processes and in advancing women's representation in democratic governance in Nigeria.

Having operated the policy in promoting gender equality issues, the Commission felt the need to undertake a comprehensive review in 2021 to identify its strengths and weaknesses. During the review, noticeable gaps were identified and appropriate strategies were developed to improve gender equity within the organization and to promote a more inclusive electoral process. The review aligned the IGP with the INEC Strategic Plan 2022 – 2026: Consolidating Free, Fair, Credible and Inclusive Elections. The outcome of the review process informed the Commission to establish a new Department of Gender and Inclusivity with the task of raising awareness on gender sensitivity and improving gender equity. The revised IGP and accompanying implementation framework also provide INEC and other stakeholders with the actionable steps and key performance indicators for pursuing and achieving the goal of advancing gender concerns in all electoral activities.

The Commission is committed to the implementation of the IGP and affirms that gender issues would continue to remain at the center of its efforts at fostering the advancement of women and the inclusive participation of all citizens in the political system and electoral process.



Professor Mahmood Yakubu
Chairman, INEC
December 2021

Acknowledgments

The Independent National Electoral Commission wishes to thank Organisations and individuals that contributed to the review of the Commission's Gender Policy and its implementation framework.

The financial and technical support of our partners, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), and the input of the Country Director, Mr. Seray Jay, Project Officer, Ms. Judith Abiem-Toryem, and Lois Nkwachi Chinedu from the review process to the final production of the Policy are greatly appreciated.

We are also indebted to Mrs. Mufuliat Fijabi and Mrs. Esther Eghobiamen Mshelia who served as Consultants for their painstaking efforts in bringing the documents to fruition. Our gratitude also goes to various gender experts from the Civil Society Organisations and other stakeholders who assiduously went through the documents and supported the production of the revised policy. They include Dr. Abiola Akiyode-Afolabi, Ms. Ene Ede, Ms. Ebere Ifendu, Hajia Asma'u Joda, Ms. Felicia Onibon, Dr. Lydia Umar, Late Barr. Esther Uzoma, Mr. Chris Azor, Chundung Ashley Dauda and a host of others.

The Commission showed commitment and leadership in its support for the review of the Policy through the professional direction and guidance of the Hon. Chairman, Professor Mahmood Yakubu.

We appreciated the members of the Outreach and Partnership Committee (OPC) Barr. Festus Okoye, Prof. Abdullahi Abdu Zuru, Prof. Mohammed Sani Kala, Dr. Baba Bila, and Prof. Sani Mohammad Adam (SAN) for their efforts in seeing to the successful completion of the policy review process.

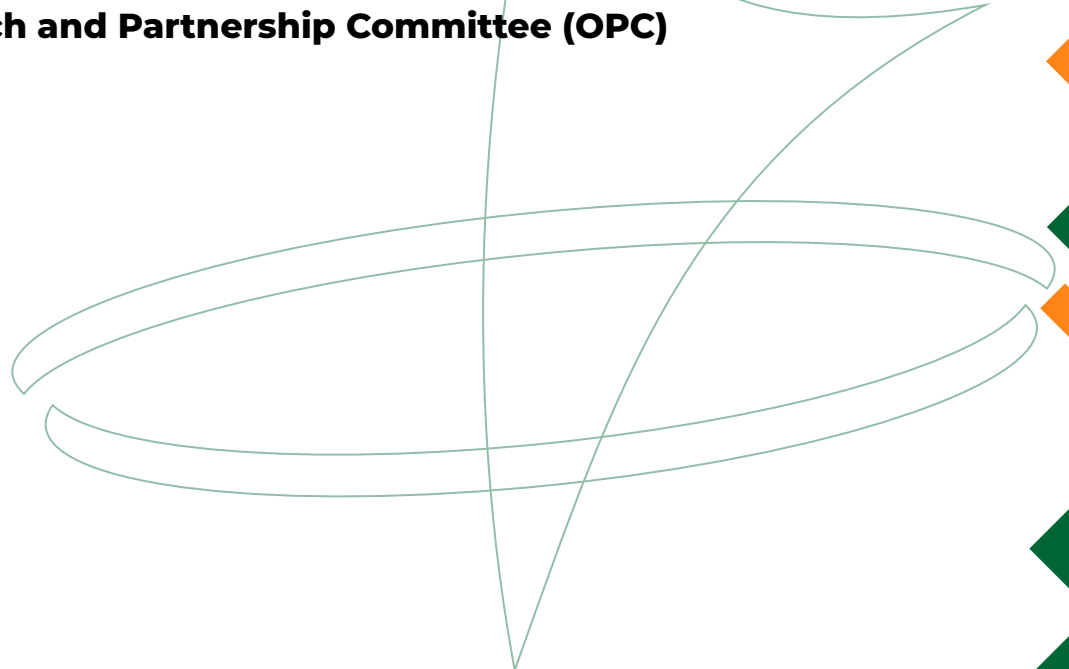
We are grateful to Dr. Adekunle Ladipo Ogunmola, the immediate past Chairman and other members of the (OPC) Committee, Mrs. May Agbamuche-Mbu, Mallam Mohammed Kudu Haruna, Prof. Okechukwu Ibeanu, AVM Ahmed Tijani Mu'azu (Rtd), Prof. Antonia Simbine, and Mrs. Amina Zakari, for their support and leadership in the course of the project. We acknowledge the invaluable contributions of the Resident Electoral Commissioners, Secretary to the Commission, Mrs. Rose Oriaran-Anthony, and the Technical Team to the Honourable Chairman, Prof. Muhammad Kuna (SA), Prof. Bolade Eyinla (CTA), and Mr. Rotimi Oyekanmi (CPS).

The diligence and tenacity of Mrs. Blessing Obidegwu, Director, Gender and Inclusivity Department in driving the review process are noteworthy. It is also important to acknowledge the commitment of staff members of the Gender Division, Mrs. Chika Osuji, Mrs. Habiba Jatto, Mrs. Agnes Babatunde-Kareem, Mr. Ikechukwu Ezeala, Mrs. Victoria Ogbo, Mrs. Taiwo Oluwuyi, Mrs. Maureen Ivoke, Mr. Aminu Shawai, Mrs. Racheal Ebim, Mrs. Angela Okpanachi, Mr. Paul Mbanago, and Mr. Clement Idoko.

We are indeed grateful to all persons who in one way or the other contributed to the review and update of the policy. We say thank you to you all.

Prof. Kunle Ajayi

Chairman, Outreach and Partnership Committee (OPC)



Gender Glossary

Term	Definition
Bias Blockers	Instruments and tools used to assess discrimination in recruitment selection processes that disadvantage women and other groups
Electoral Cycle	These are the many phases including a series of activities and processes involved in planning, organizing, and concluding elections which reveal the continuous nature of elections rather than stand-alone events.
Electoral Stakeholders	Any person or group with a vested interest in or having expectations of a certain level of performance or compliance from the EMB, its strategic actions, and corresponding activities.
Fast Track Gender Approach	A method or process of delivering gender mainstreaming strategy or roadmap by using quick measures or modalities for stopping or redressing gender discrimination, disparities, exclusion, or marginalization through decisive positive action
Gender	A culturally based and socially constructed terminology that often spells out or defines expectations of the roles and behaviors of men and women, boys and girls as well as the relationships between them.
Gender Equality	A society or situation where there is an absence of discrimination based on a person's sex in the access to opportunities, resources, and privileges.
Gender Mainstreaming/ Integration	The process of integrating the concerns of women and men in the design, implementation, and evaluation of all planned activities to ensure that both men and women benefit.
Gender-positive	Targeted interventions and activities that promote gender equality by actively addressing and overcoming barriers to men's and women's equal participation.
Gender perspective	Entails consideration for how gendered expectations impact power relations; participation in economic, political, and social spheres; and men's and women's different opportunities.
Gender-sensitive	An approach to planning and implementation that identifies gender differences between women's and men's priorities, interests, and challenges, and what impact these have on gender equality.
Gender-specific	Explicit identification of how an activity, plan, or strategy will address gender issues.
Sex	The biological characteristics that define humans as female or male.
Women's Empowerment	The strengthening of women's views, voices, and concerns, equipping women to contribute their potential to socio-economic growth and development.

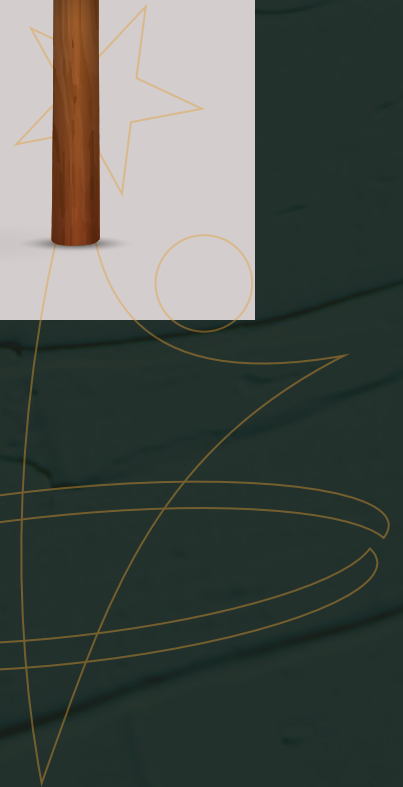


Acronyms

BPFA	Beijing Platform for Action
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
COVID-19	Corona virus Disease 2019
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
EMB	Election Management Body
IGP	INEC Gender Policy
INEC	Independent National Electoral Commission
PWDs	Persons with Disabilities
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNSCR1325	United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security



1.0 Introduction
and
Background



1.1 The adoption and launch of the 2014 Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) Gender Policy (IGP) and subsequent implementation between 2014-2019 was precedential and has created widespread awareness on gender and election concerns, bringing to visibility, the need for sustained engagement with systemic barriers and patriarchal strongholds such as the monopoly of electoral and political processes in Nigeria as in other parts of the world. The inclusion of women in the democratic spaces remains a major bridge to cross in the efforts to effectively address the exclusion of women in elective and representative governance in Nigeria. Deepening existing commitment and efforts geared at addressing the weaknesses in electoral systems and practices often manifested in the limited number of female leaders emerging via elections is a persistent global challenge.¹ This demands that the vehicle for leadership recruitment be constantly reviewed and innovative approaches adopted as stakeholders work together to engage with factors limiting women's meaningful participation in politics to achieve results-based outcomes.

1.2 The first IGP was itself a response to the National Gender Policy (2006) and the Vision 20:20 (2009), which both recognized that gender equality and women's empowerment are basic human rights that lie at the heart of equitable development and consequently call on all state and non-state actors to promote gender equality through their institutional policies and practices. This reality has been reaffirmed by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As an independent state actor, the Commission has strongly demonstrated its commitment to addressing gender gaps internally as an organization, and to promoting a gender-responsive electoral process through all available means under its purview. This is by equity benchmarks - a core Commission value - which requires it to maintain fairness and justice in dealing with all of its stakeholders. Additionally, there exists, other domestic legal imperatives, including Section 42 of Nigeria's Constitution (1999, as amended), which specifically prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sex, as well as the Electoral Act of 2010 (as amended) which prescribes fairness and protection of the interests of all.



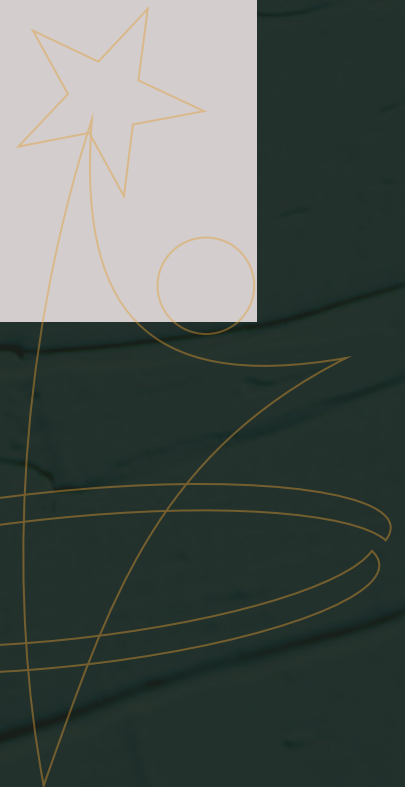
1.3 This revised Commission's gender policy like its predecessor is also informed by several international and regional obligations to which Nigeria is a signatory. These instruments include among many others, the:

- 💡 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR);
- 💡 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CPPR);
- 💡 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR);
- 💡 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW);
- 💡 International Covenant on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CPRD);
- 💡 The Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA);
- 💡 African Charter on Human and People's Rights;
- 💡 United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women Peace and Security (UNSCR1325);
- 💡 Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa; and African Union Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa;
- 💡 Sustainable Development Goals
- 💡 Africa Agenda 2063; and
- 💡 The Gender Agenda of the Africa Agenda 2063





2.0 Context and Rationale



2.1 This revised IGP allows INEC to explore new tactics for guiding political parties and building partnerships for achieving this critical aspect of the IGP. The law governing elections in Nigeria states that any candidate needs the support of a political party, while independent candidates are not allowed. This leaves the political parties with a monopoly on the recruitment of politicians and this directly impacts women's political participation. When left unaddressed and unguided, the performance of this key function often undermines the principles of good governance, fair and credible elections. In Nigeria, this situation seems to be challenging the noble work and aspirations of INEC.

2.2 This IGP will accordingly respond by providing sufficient training, including gender and leadership training for women in the Commission at all levels, educating and sensitizing political parties and key stakeholders to better manage, review and utilize gender bias blockers in the procedures of candidate selection including traditional recruitment pathways.

The electoral law of Nigeria describes in detail how nominations are conducted, through democratic and transparent procedures, including the requirement to hold direct or indirect primaries for all elective positions. This IGP will therefore serve as a vehicle for better integration and application of gender principles alongside non-discriminatory constitutional clauses to this provision.

2.3 Data collection on the extent to which Nigeria's political parties comply with regulations on equity and democratic representation, will be a vital contribution of the revised IGP. This will equip other stakeholders to further complement INEC's mandate of conducting free fair, credible and inclusive elections removing other strong barriers to women's unequal representation in running for political office. Against this backdrop, INEC acknowledges the increasing demand for nations to rise to global, regional, and sub-regional frameworks and



models on equitable and inclusive governance as a vital indicator of good governance. This is particularly so, in the aftermath of lessons learned on how women's alternate leadership style was successfully deployed globally in the tackling of the COVID-19 pandemic resulting in huge health and socio-economic gains across the world.

2.4 Finally, building on the gains of the first IGP places an institutional imperative on the Commission to provide clearer and more measurable policy direction, with an actionable implementation framework evidenced in the strengthening of existing architecture to accelerate the good work already started. This will signify the ongoing commitment of the Commission and demonstrate the relevance and capacity of the policy to deliver gender mainstreaming results for all categories of women.





3.0 Policy
Strategic
Relevance



In pursuit of INEC's overall institutional mandate and goal, implementation of the revised IGP shall facilitate:

3.1 Positioning of INEC as an enabler of existing and unfolding policy and legislative reforms by complementing through its gatekeeper role as it relates to constitutional and legislative reform efforts to fast track gender inclusion and women's increased participation in decision-making through the electoral system.

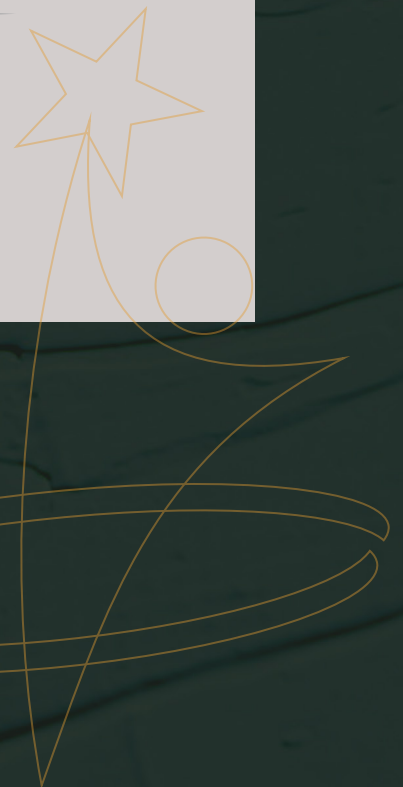
3.2 Sustaining INEC's Gender commitments through systemic and operational reforms that translate to results and enable the harnessing of internal and external opportunities using a coordinated, management-led, and results-focused IGP implementation approach.

3.3 Fulfilling of institutional aspirations to be a leading EMB that promotes inclusive, transparent, and credible election and in so doing, utilize all available mechanisms and election management entry points to deliver new inclusive models for redressing institutional and socio-political gaps as it relates to the IGP.



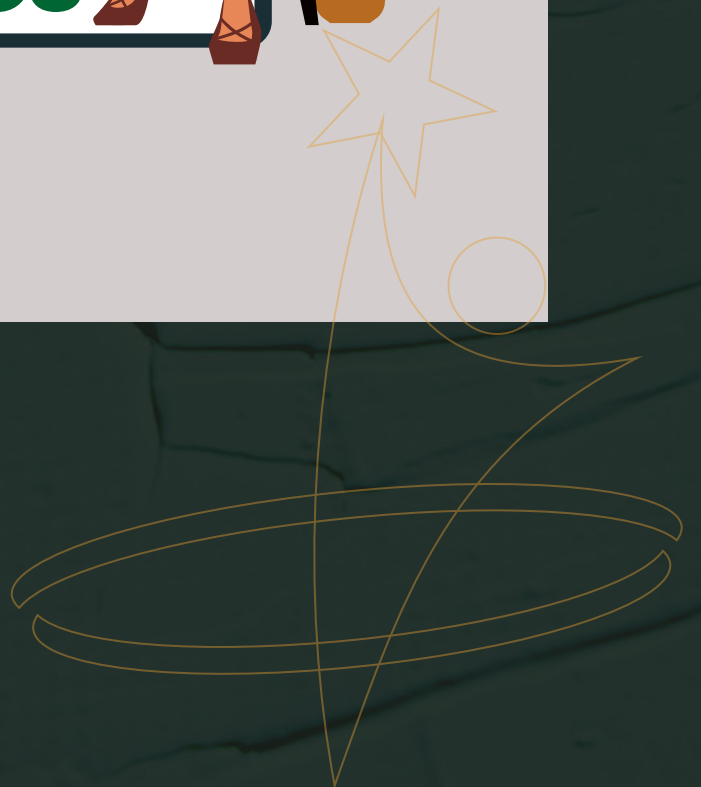


4.0 Policy Thrust

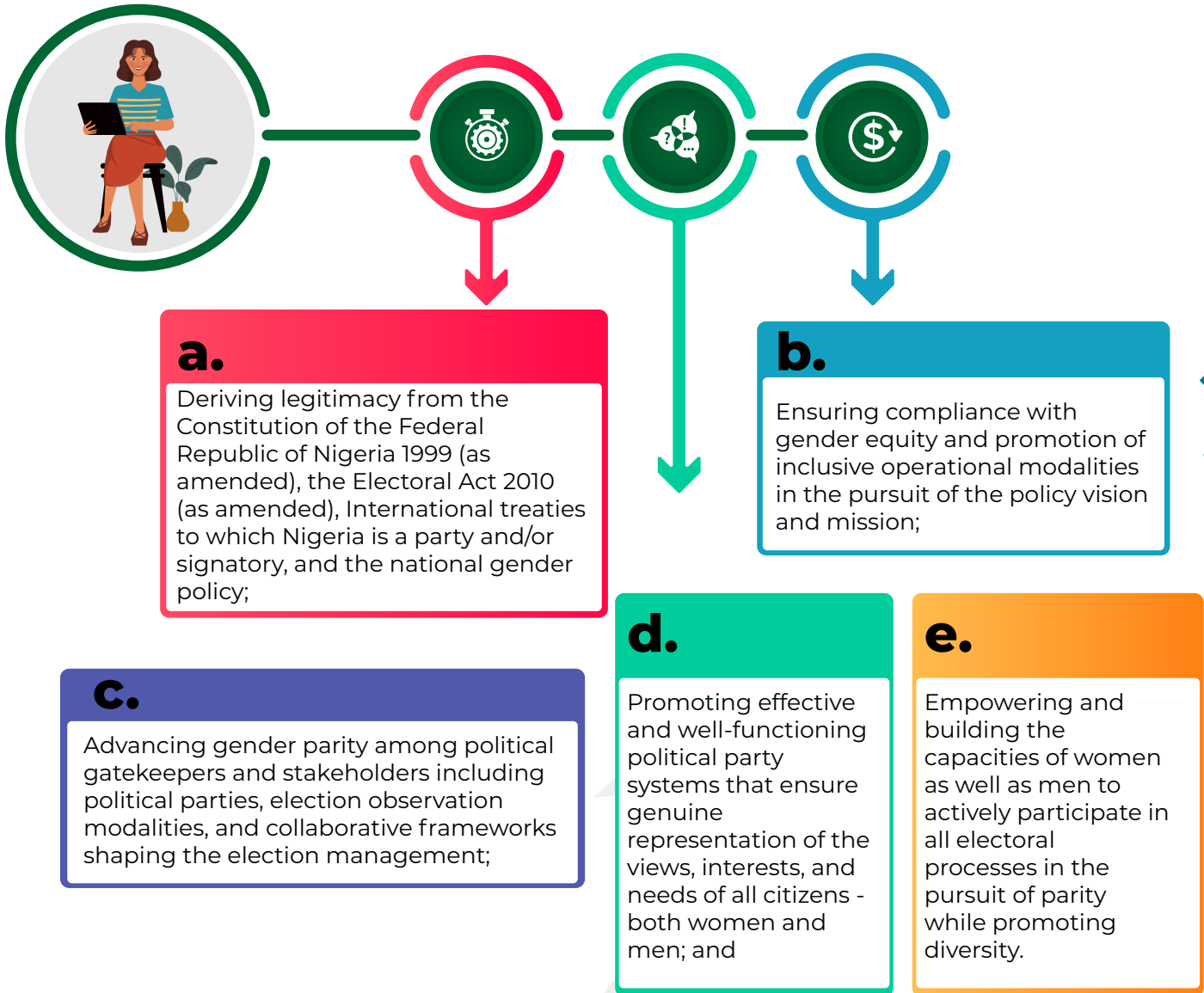


In consonance with the overall institutional goals, all IGP implementation efforts will contribute to unleashing the potentials of the Commission to enhance gender mainstreaming internally through gender and leadership training for women in the Commission at all levels, and enhanced inclusivity of all categories of women thereby reducing gender and other forms of exclusion either based on age or physical abilities in electoral processes to deepen gender-responsive good governance and promote gender compliance of electoral provisions.





To align with institutional principles and values, while adhering with global normative gender principles and values, the revised IGP shall draw its essence, be grounded in, and pursue the following ideals:



6.0 Policy Vision

To be one of the most gender-responsive and inclusive election management bodies in the world and strive to make the electoral process more inclusive.

7.0 Policy Mission

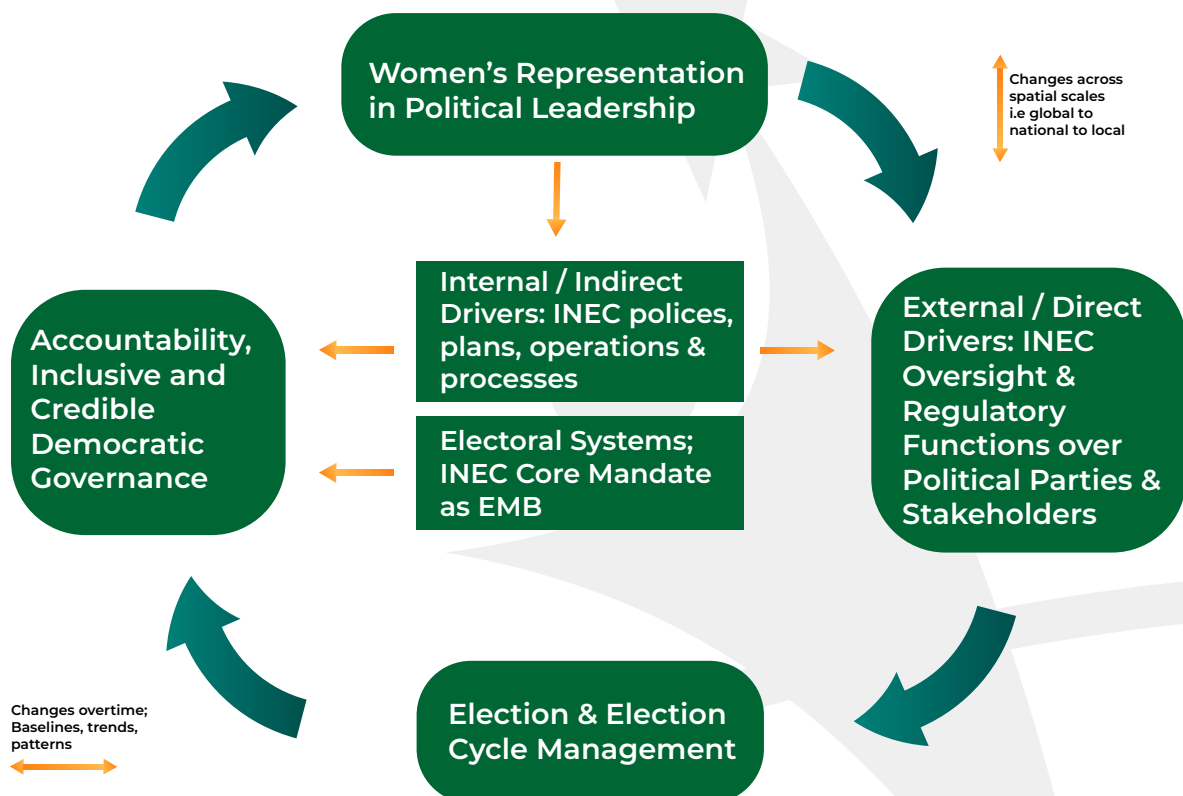
To mainstream gender concerns, with measurable results, in the overall work of the Commission including its internal and external operations.

8.0 Policy Goal

To contribute towards building INEC as an EMB that is committed to the conduct of free, fair, credible and inclusive elections.

9.0 Policy Conceptual Framework

To mainstream gender concerns, with measurable results, in the overall work of the Commission including its internal and external operations.



The IGP draws on existing normative frameworks on gender mainstreaming which have revealed the success of the dual-track approach in delivering gender equality results more effectively.

9.1 The IGP draws on existing normative frameworks on gender mainstreaming which have revealed the success of the dual-track approach in delivering gender equality results more effectively. This approach demonstrates that engendering internal policies and operations of an institution on one track, translates to gender results in the execution of functions and provision of services to external stakeholders and partners on another track. The combined results from the internal and external gender mainstreaming efforts generate greater impact both vertically and horizontally and at macro and micro levels resulting in changes over time and across different levels of society down to the grassroots.

9.2 Thus, the IGP conceptual framework seeks to address women's low representation in political leadership especially throughout the electoral system using two pathways. The first will focus on internal drivers related to its policies, plans, operations as these indirectly but significantly affect gender and inclusion in electoral systems and the election management cycle. Increased gender sensitivity of INEC internal systems will in turn positively affect the external drivers of gender exclusion especially political parties and critical stakeholders. This will translate to increased gender mainstreaming results in political party operations, implementation of their existing gender-sensitive policies, and engagement with electoral processes including candidate selection. Systematic application of the policy measures through this framework should enable implementation with clear and measurable results both over time and across spatial scales i.e. from Federal to State to the local government levels.





10.0

Policy Objectives



The IGP reaffirms the need to build on key lessons and findings of the Commission on transformative and results-based gender mainstreaming. Increased national demands for greater accountability to women's political rights and inclusive governance also support the need to consolidate the gains recorded in the first IGP implementation. The bid to deepen the relevance and effectiveness of the policy informs the retention of the previous policy objectives as strategic objectives. The policy is geared to achieve more reach and impact. Accordingly, the objectives are aimed at guiding the realization of short- and long-term results, as stated below;

- 💡 Ensure that INEC's internal systems, response mechanisms including policies, plans, processes, and operations are gender-responsive to enable compliance with mandate-related gender obligations and mitigation of workplace and other forms of gender-based violence.

Encourage gender equity and balance within political parties especially in the identification of candidates in line with the provisions of their statutes and relevant binding national legal provisions.

- 💡 Implement gender-responsive budgeting systems and principles to better resource policy aspirations and mobilize partnerships to complement the Commission's efforts towards gender-sensitive actions within their purview; and
- 💡 Support the realization of legislative provisions that pre-determine the achievement of gender equality targets in political representation at all electoral levels.

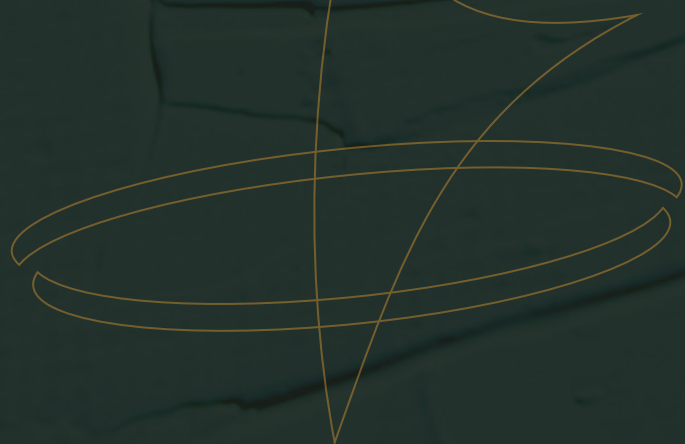
10.1 Expected Outcome

- 💡 Broadly, implementing the IGP will enable the Commission's gender commitment to be translated into concrete and measurable results that address and help to reverse gender exclusion and discrimination, internally and externally.





11.0 Policy Target



Key performance targets for rating progress in the implementation, effectiveness, and impact of the IGP shall be detailed in the accompanying implementation framework/action plan. Broad targets set for each policy objective shall be as follows:



12.0 Conclusion and Sustained commitment for Policy Action



“The creation of the Gender and Inclusivity Department is further evidence of the commitment to sustaining the institutional gender results.”

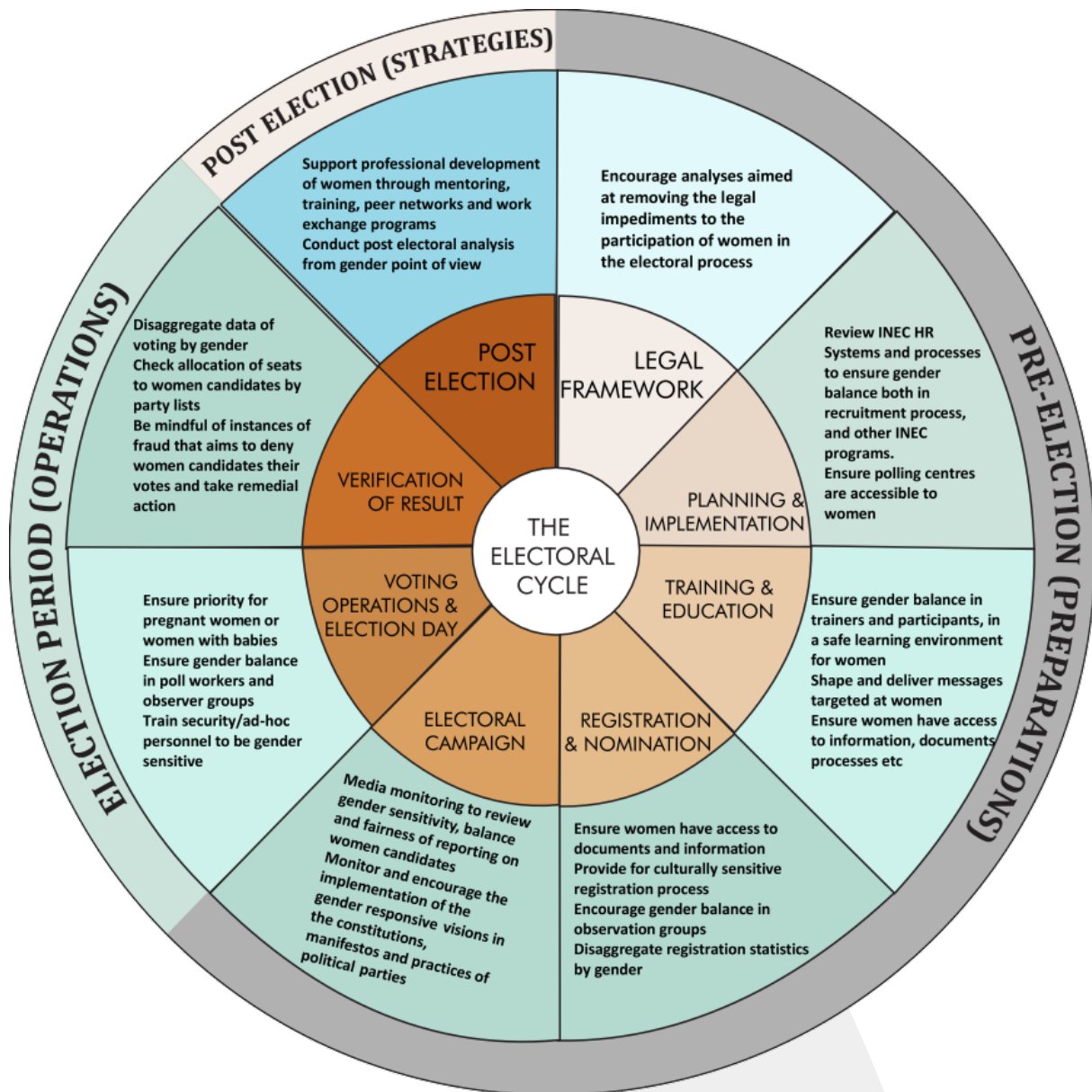
The IGP will contribute substantially to shifting the political paradigm in Nigeria’s electoral process towards better recognition of the role of gender equality in determining the outcomes of power distribution through the integration of gender into the election management cycle. Efforts geared at addressing the need for women’s increased participation in politics have recorded several innovations like the 2014 IGP. Additionally, in pursuit of increased gender responsiveness, Affirmative Action steps such as a Merit Quota for women in the recruitment and promotion policy have been taken by the Commission. The creation of the Gender and Inclusivity Department is further evidence of the commitment to sustaining the institutional gender results. Undoubtedly, this IGP will help in charting new frontiers, adopting and using more innovative approaches for expanding women’s participation in politics, and systematically delivering gender results in every segment of the electoral cycle. This noble objective remains the prerogative of government and the Commission as, the country’s national election umpire.

The commitment of the Commission is grounded and will continue to be shaped by the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended), the Electoral Act as amended, and other global charters adopted by most countries in the world.

The Commission commits to contributing its quota to the promotion of equity and equality between women and men in the electoral process. This will make the effective implementation of the IGP crucial in the strive to build a more inclusive, democratic, and prosperous society as this is smart economics that is both timely and imperative for good governance.



Electoral Cycle



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



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