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FIFTH INTER-AMERICAN ELECTORAL SEMINAR

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CONCEPT PAPER

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Inter-American Electoral Training Seminars are initiatives led by the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States (GS/OAS) in collaboration with the Federal Electoral Institute of Mexico (IFE) and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA). These training seminars are events designed to promote the improvement of the organization and administration of the electoral processes and systems throughout the hemisphere.

To this end, the fifth edition of these seminars: the “Fifth Inter-American Electoral Training Seminar” will take place this year from the 26th to the 30th of November in Mexico City, focusing on two main topics: “Overseas voting: challenges and realities” and “The political participation of women: gender quotas and projects developed by Electoral Management Bodies to promote female participation”. The methodology of the training seminar comprises distinct areas: (a) academic and technical training facilitated by professors and experts in the field, and (b) discussions and horizontal cooperation between electoral authorities with extensive experience in the program topics.

In order to generate practical improvements by way of the seminar, each participant should formulate a concrete initiative that is based on the principal topics of the Training Seminar, one that will contribute to the improvement of a specific practice, or incorporate an innovation into the institutional practices within his or her area of responsibility.



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BACKGROUND

The first phase of international electoral technical cooperation led by the OAS and other organisms engaged in international cooperation, occurred during the 1980s and 1990s, allowing for the establishment of electoral authorities as the institutions responsible for the organization and administration of elections. In other words, international organizations such as the OAS played a fundamental role in the establishment of these entities as electoral management bodies with the basic infrastructure needed to organize elections. This long and comprehensive process accompanied the establishment of many of the electoral management bodies in the Americas.

In the present day, OAS technical cooperation with electoral authorities focuses on addressing the principal challenge currently confronting these bodies, institutional capacity building. This challenge is addressed from three levels:

In order to strengthen the work of electoral management bodies, and as part of an institutional restructuring of the political area of the OAS General Secretariat, four years ago the GS/OAS established the Department for Electoral Cooperation and Observation (DECO), which is charged with supporting electoral systems and institutions throughout the region. Through its operational sections, DECO collaborates with electoral management bodies to strengthen their administrative, technical, legal, and institutional capacities, as well as to identify and disseminate information regarding good practices.

One of the initiatives promoted by DECO is the institutionalization of the Inter- American Electoral Training Seminars. The first Seminar was held in 2008, and since then, the conferences have been a continuous exercise carried out on an annual basis. These Seminars, through exercises at both a technical and academic level, support the professionalization of electoral authorities in the region and promote horizontal cooperation. In fact, the main challenge addressed by the Seminars is the need for mechanisms to continuously professionalize electoral authorities, aimed at strengthening the skills of the members and officials of the electoral bodies. Thus, the training seminars are academic and practical exercises that help improve the organization of electoral processes in the continent.

In the context of achieving the previously mentioned objectives, and considering topics identified in direct consultation with electoral authorities, this Fifth Inter-American Training Seminar will focus on “Overseas voting: challenges and realities” and “The political participation of women: gender quotas and projects developed by Electoral Management Bodies to promote female participation”.

The Fifth Inter-American Training Seminar is hosted by the GS/OAS in collaboration with IFE and IDEA International. Drawing from the diverse knowledge and experience of each of these three organizations, each counterpart contributes an area of academic and technical experience, in addition to their relevant international experience

The Federal Electoral Institute of Mexico (IFE) is a permanent, public, autonomous organism, independent in its decisions and operations, responsible for organizing federal elections in Mexico. IFE was created by a constitutional mandate in October 1990. Its operations are guided by five fundamental principles: certainty, legality, independence, impartiality, and objectivity. Since its formation in 1993, IFE's International Affairs Coordination has actively promoted technical electoral cooperation at the international level. Through different agreements and accords with diverse international organizations and electoral management bodies from other nations, IFE has participated in technical assistance and electoral observation missions in over 15 countries throughout the Americas. IFE has organized various official visits on behalf of international organizations and electoral organisms of other countries, and has carried out diverse events to promote democracy and electoral training, including through publications. IFE's contribution towards this activity is based on its vast experience in technical coordination of conferences, seminars, forums, courses, and workshops that utilize interdisciplinary perspectives and comparative electoral analysis, facilitating horizontal cooperation between different interest groups at an international level. Since September 2010, these activities have been developed within the IFE's International Center for Training and Electoral Research framework.

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), founded in 1995 as intergovernmental organization with 25 member states, supports sustainable democracy worldwide. Its objective is to strengthen democratic institutions and processes. The particular strengths of International IDEA lie in the areas of: knowledge resources, particularly networks of experts, databases, handbooks and websites; policy proposals to incite debate and action on democracy; and assistance with democratic reform in response to specific national requests. IDEA works together with policy makers, donor governments, UN organizations and agencies, regional organizations, as well as other actors engaged in democracy building. Their areas of expertise include: electoral processes, political representation, processes of constitution-building, democracy and gender, democracy and security and democracy assessments. Based in Stockholm, Sweden, International IDEA works worldwide and has offices in New York, Brussels, Africa, Asia-Pacific and an extensive regional program in Latin America.

METHODOLOGY

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The methodology of the Training Seminar is centered on four objectives. Firstly, the course provides high-level academic and technical training for staff members of electoral management bodies from professionals and experts in the field. The second objective of the Training Seminar is to encourage horizontal cooperation among electoral management bodies. In order to achieve this goal, activities will be conducted which involve discussions and the exchange of experiences. The third objective is the delivery of technical tools to participants, with the aim of implementing changes and improvements in their particular national contexts. The final objective is practical application of the information that is shared, through the development on behalf of individual participants of proposal to improve some aspect within their specific area of work.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK DURING THE SEMINAR

The presentation of the topics for this years' Training Seminar will be raised in panel discussions in which participants will be able to operationalize the day's topics. These panels will be made up of professors, experts, practitioners as well as representatives of organizations engaged in international cooperation, who will address the sub-topics that have been identified as priorities for this Seminar.

Panel Discussions will be followed by a program of "experience exchange" in which participants will have the opportunity to share their opinions on the principal problems presented by the specific context of their country of origin, so that ultimately, through the methodology of project formulation, they can begin to identify possible solutions.

The final two days of the Training Seminar will involve a workshop called "Demolatina," consisting of working group sessions in which a real life case will be simulated. This will allow different participant groups to confront common problems by assuming different roles and applying the knowledge acquired throughout the Training Seminar to the resolution of the problem raised.

APPLYING THE CONTENT OF THE SEMINAR TO REGIONAL EXPERIENCE

As a result of the impressions, knowledge and experiences shared during the Seminar, with a particular emphasis on project formulation methodology, participants will be responsible for designing a concrete initiative that will either contribute the bettering of a particular area or incorporate innovation into institutional practices within their area of responsibility, with the understanding that this project should be linked with one of the two thematic areas examined by the Seminar.

Towards the end of the seminar, participants will hand in their proposals that will serve as the basis for the implementation of the projects and follow up work after the seminar.

TOPIC 1 – VOTING FROM ABROAD: REALITIES AND CHALLENGES

"Nowadays more countries allow their expatriates to vote because the political jurisdictions are highly territorialized in the world we live in although in the public arena the political discourse has acquired a dramatic transnational nature." (Bauböck, 2006)

"External [or out-of-country] voting is when suffrage happens outside the national boundaries by citizens belonging to a country where an election is taking place whenever the legal framework recognizes them such right and authorizes them to do it in that fashion." (Valverde, 1990)

The international political scenario that started to be outlined at the beginning of the 1990s can help understand why the issue of voting from abroad is core in the political agenda of many countries around the world. Political, economic and social globalization; the democratic regulations, institutions and values being unprecedentedly reassessed and disseminated; the faster, and now almost instantaneous, access to multiple sources of information; and the emergence of a civil society that is not only more conscious of its rights but demands them, are some of the catalysts for the vindication of the universal suffrage.

Even if migration is an intrinsic feature of humankind, there is no doubt the substantial rise of international migratory flows were characteristic of the last years of the 20th Century and the first of the 21st. The number of international migrants between 1960 and 2000 is estimated to have gone from about 80 to almost 180 million. In our continent, international migration increased from 20 to 25 million from year 2000 to 2005; of which around 22 million are located in the developed economies of North America, Europe and Japan, while about 3 to 5 million are employed in bordering countries of Latin America and the Caribbean (BID, 2006).

It is interesting to analyze that “not only have the numbers of potential external voters increased [as a result of migration flows]; they are also more mobile and move or travel faster, which increases the demand for external voting practices to function in different circumstances” (International IDEA, IFE, 2007, p.2).

Politics’ globalization has allowed the society inside and outside a country to have a better knowledge of its civil rights, and consequently to demand from the State their actual exercise. That is the reason why “in many countries the right of citizens who are resident abroad, or of tourists or travelling businessmen who are temporarily or permanently abroad on election day, to participate in elections is a fairly recent development, and it is not yet universal in any part of the world. Universal—that is, unrestricted and unconditional—external voting is, however, regarded by many as part of the citizen’s rights” (International IDEA, IFE, 2007, p. 7).

Challenges that arise from the debate and legal recognition of out-of-country voting

Although many States of the world have agreed to the demands of more and more diasporas to vote from abroad, it must be kept in mind that there is still an open debate over the issue of the recognition of the migrants’ political rights and that its answer lies in the national circumstances.

The Uruguayan case is quite a good example. At the end of 2000, the Frente Amplio Party (Wide Front – FA) submitted to the Senate a Constitutional reform that would give response to the demands to allow the vote of Uruguayans abroad. The proposal, which stated that consulates would carry out the functions of polling stations, was rejected, as the one submitted in 2004 that considered postal voting.

In response to a new attempt of FA to promote the issue, the decision taken was to leave it in the hands of the citizens and a plebiscite took place on October 2009. The promoters were

surprised when only 37.42% of the voters cast a vote IN FAVOUR of external voting for Uruguayans.

Another of the challenges that stem from implementing out-of-country voting can be examined from the electoral authority's point of view, since "the actual practice of voting from abroad is difficult because of a number of elements, like the amount of voters, their location and the complexity of the voting system currently in force. External voting implies a double planning process since the tasks required for organizing the election inside the country must be standardized under very different circumstances" (Thompson, 2007, p. 120).

One more consideration has to do with economic requirements, challenges that its implementation brings along, for additional costs are implied, and they are often higher to those required for voting inside the country. For instance, when a personal vote mechanism is chosen to vote outside the country, costs for the following concepts must be considered:

- Security at the polling centres and for the materials and people inside them. Special security agreements are needed sometimes if risks for the voters and the ballots are identified throughout the process.
- Staff, including hiring, salaries and training.
- Office facilities (if there are internal infrastructure or communication troubles, it might be necessary to manage out-of-country voting from a foreign office).
- Travelling of the administrative staff and for overseeing reasons.
- Training: special materials and programs might be needed both for the registration and for the casting of votes.
- Electoral registration program.
- Electoral materials, like printing of the ballots and installing of the polling tables.
- Transportation of the electoral materials.

Finally, one of the core elements in the debate over voting from abroad has to do with its political implications. In the practice, the position taken by the political forces and the legislators usually assess in advance the size and potential distribution of the preferences between the contenders. Among the considerations from this side of the debate, the possibility of carrying out electoral campaigns or promoting of out-of-country voting is found.

Overview of external voting

Although the regulations and the specific mechanisms to allow out-of-country voting are not a recent phenomenon in the continent, the first records in Latin America go back to the decade of 1960, it is undeniable that it has gained particular visibility and relevance in the most recent years because of the particular circumstances and demands in each national context, but more importantly as a result of the prevailing tendencies in the contemporary international scenario mentioned earlier.

In this logic, external voting can be explained, on one side, as an attempt to deal —even if in a limited manner since it evidently only address partially the issue of political rights— with the

obvious democratic deficit that the international migration phenomena and policies of our time produce, while being a window of opportunity for some States to rescue, redefine or reinforce the terms of the political and institutional relations with their communities abroad. In the end, however limited in scope and effects, it sends an important symbolic sign of interest, concern and inclusion.

An unequivocal sign of the relevance and contemporariness this issue has gained in the continent lies in the fact that even if only 18 of its countries currently report positive records and concrete experiences on their citizens voting from abroad, there are debates on the future endorsement in almost all of the remaining countries, at least from Latin America. Some of them have even reached to the point of articulating law initiatives that have not prospered.

Table 1 shows some of the basic registries on the 18 countries of the continent whose legislation recognizes and regulates out-of-country voting. Emphasis must be made on two of them, since the provisions on this regard were recently included and will implement it for the first time at their next national elections (Costa Rica in 2013 and Paraguay in 2014). Nicaragua is a special case because its legislation already acknowledges external voting but the necessary regulations for it to actually happen have not been approved.

Table 1. Countries of the American continent with voting from abroad arrangements¹

Country	Mechanism	Type of election	Implementation date
Argentina	Personal	Presidential/legislative	1993
Bahamas	Personal	Legislative	2012
Barbados	Personal	Legislative/referendum	N/D
Belize	Proxy	Legislative/referendum	N/D
Bolivia	Personal	Presidential	2009
Brazil	Personal	Presidential	1989
Canada	Postal	Legislative/referendum	1944
Colombia	Personal	Presidential/legislative	1962
Costa Rica	Personal	Presidential/legislative	2014
Ecuador	Personal	Presidential	2006
United States of America	Postal/Personal/ Internet ²	Presidential/legislative/referendum/local	1942
Honduras	Personal	Presidential	2001
Mexico	Postal	Presidential	2006
Panama	Postal	Presidential	2007
Paraguay	Personal	Presidential/legislative	2013
Peru	Personal	Presidential/legislative/referendum	1980

² Voting from abroad is managed at a local level, which is why each states chooses the mechanism.

Dominican Rep.	Personal	Presidential	2004
Venezuela	Personal	Presidential	1998

In most cases, particularly in Latin American countries, efforts and initiatives for the recognition of out-of-country voting are conceived and prosper as part of processes meant to open, liberalize or reform the political regimes through adding some sense of democracy and with the evident intention of legitimating the proposed changes or adjustments as well as the whole political and electoral regime.

In this sense, it is convenient to add that even if the political definitions and the resulting legislative rulings given to initiatives for voting from abroad are a consequence of political, electoral and party interests and considerations, it is also clear that the ultimate intention of redefining and broadening the notion of political community in such a way that it includes the diaspora of citizens residing overseas. Put differently, of restoring or enhancing their sense of belonging and relevance to the national political community; of revising universal suffrage through its quantitative and qualitative dimensions; and of reaching farther from the constraints of territories and national borders.

Key components

Although the one essential requirement for a person to be qualified as an overseas' elector is to be citizen, the law often requires that other conditions are met before they are enfranchised which end up restraining the access for legal, administrative or practical reasons.

Of the continent's countries, only in Bahamas, Barbados and Belize is external voting explicitly limited to certain officers because of their duties overseas, and in the case of the latter, their vote is cast through proxy voting. That would be its most restrictive side. Regulations like those of Argentina and Brazil that demand potential electors to actually reside on a permanent basis abroad also limit the access in a different and less emphatic way. In those cases, the possibility of enfranchising citizens temporarily living overseas is completely nullified, let alone the so-called electors in transit that are not included in any of the mechanisms in the region.

The decision on the scope and kind of elections to which out-of-country voting applies is clearly based on political and institutional definitions, which are distinctly related to each State's political organization and with the political decision/participation options the government is willing to grant to overseas' electors.

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that when defining the coverage and extent of out-of-country voting administrative, logistic and operational considerations related with the characteristics and complexities of the electoral regime as a whole are carefully studied. In other words, the eventual decision of including legislative, regional or local elections cannot be taken without keeping in mind the dilemmas and challenges relevant to its implementation. From this

perspective, it is not the same to manage the voting for a legislative election based on one single national list to one based on multiple single-member districts.

In general, terms, there are four basic mechanisms for citizens abroad to cast their vote: in person, postal, proxy, and through electronic means (e-vote), being the personal vote the most used in the Americas.

The first mechanism requires the elector to go personally to the polling tables especially installed for that purpose. Regularly, those tables are set at the diplomatic or consular facilities of a given country, however, when those are inadequate or insufficient for all the registered voters other best-suited places in terms of security and easy access for the voting and tallying procedures are normally used. In those cases, it is very common that schools or sports clubs are leased or that other facilities belonging to that government's offices or even working centers or companies of the same given country in the host country are used, just as the Brazilian law mandates.

The general rule is also for the tables to be installed and function the same day and during the same hours as in the national voting, with the obvious adaptations needed, for instance, for different time zones. Even though the criteria for selecting or appointing the members of the out-of-country polling tables is similar to those inside the country, those procedures can be adjusted to the prevailing circumstances or limitations overseas, i.e. by allowing consular officers to act as polling table clerks. This mechanism can work with the conventional marking of the ballot and placing it in a box or with electronic means (as in Brazil or Venezuela). In short, the person must attend to the precincts designated by the authorities, where its representatives have everything under their control.

As for postal voting, the elector must receive all the appropriate documents through the mail-delivery service and, after marking the ballot, send it back to his/her homeland using the same method. Voting by proxy means that the citizen abroad can designate someone of his entire confidence to cast a vote on his/her behalf at a polling table in the country of origin or overseas whereas with the remote electronic voting the elector can cast his/her vote via Internet, mobile phones or landlines, or personal digital assistants (International IDEA, IFE, 2007). External voting implies, by definition, additional efforts and expenses but its magnitude can substantially vary depending on the selected model and its specific characteristics.

There are, of course, significant differences in the coverage and scope among the various options for voting from abroad. As a rule, personal voting's coverage at official or special facilities is limited because it is circumscribed to the countries, and to specific regions within them, where the diplomatic or consular offices are located. In contrast, postal voting has a number of comparative advantages, even if they might be counteracted by the selective or restrictive requirements set for the registration and if its future operation might risk some principles considered essential in the electoral process and rely on variables outside electoral mechanics (trustworthiness and punctuality of the postal system).

Due to easily understandable reasons, it is quite difficult for any country in the world to have an accurate registry or reliable estimation on the amount and distribution of its diaspora overseas. This averment is even more valid when it comes to Latin American countries, where many governments not only lack of funds or instruments to “measure” or monitor their growing international migration flows, but whose main migrants are undocumented, which has an impact in terms on them being registered, contacted or assisted by their embassies or consulates.

In that sense, the available global and regional evidence suggests in a very clear way that a distance of import, if not enormous, exist between the estimates or projections on the citizens abroad that would qualify as electors and those who actually register themselves to vote.

Challenges for external voting in the Americas

The exchange of knowledge, experiences and opinions are part of the necessary reflections during the Fifth Inter American Electoral Seminar that will help discern, with as much clarity and preciseness as possible, the challenges and dilemmas faced by external voting in terms of its regulation, logistical institutional arrangements and actual implementation. In that regard, some of the main challenges the region has been facing are here-by outlined in general terms.

Just as Dieter Nohlen and Florian Grotz (2007) had already pointed out, the first conundrum comes from the possible alternative answers to the following dilemmas:

- Political representation of the citizens that live overseas or are currently abroad.
- Organizing elections beyond the national borders poses structural problems, issues about controlling the polling and concerns for the equity during the competition.
- Dispute resolution; should the results of the election be contested overseas, it would be outside of the national judicial jurisdiction.

After these considerations, it is fairly clear that electoral authorities of the region face challenges belonging to two completely different spheres, one overseas —with citizens claiming for their rights— and another one within the country —with citizens “that are left behind” and political entities that either benefit or not from its implementation. In other words, external voting must be an answer to the citizens abroad demanding to vote from their new country of residence while making it compatible and consistent with inner demands and requirements. It is that attempt to harmonize those two spheres where the current challenges on overseas voting focus.

In any case, when analyzing the problems linked to out-of-country voting, and to any decision on that regard, the extent and complexity of the dilemmas and challenges must be kept in sight because they are closely related with the particular circumstances and demands of each context and, as with nearly all matters connected with social relations, cannot follow any prescription on devices or practices universally accepted or valid. Nonetheless, to conclude, it is most useful to suggest a set of problems or quandaries that would allow to consider and to weigh up in advance any initiative or decision-making process on this matter:

- The restrictions and demands of the legal framework in relation to citizenship (tenure and exercise of political rights, particularly the eligibility both to vote and to be elected) and to the essential attributes of electoral organization and competition (transparency, security, certainty, reliability, equity) and, in consequence, the possibility of introducing the adjustments and innovations that would make out-of-country voting possible.
- The characteristics and size of the overseas population and the particular dynamics and geographical distribution of potential electors.
- The identification and comprehensive assessment of the available options to organize elections abroad, especially voter registration and polling and tallying, and its conformity with the established (or demanded) national standards. Although every alternative entails advantages and disadvantages, registry requirements and polling procedures usually advocate on the degree of inclusiveness or selectivity of the chosen mechanism.
- The capability of replicating or adapting, overseas, the essential attributes for the integrity and equity of the electoral process as a whole and, if needed the equal competition guarantees and conditions.
- The essential institutional coordination criteria and mechanisms, both nationally and internationally, to deploy any voting operation or device overseas, especially the agreements and arrangements with host countries.

The idea is for some of the posed questions to become starting points for the debates and trigger, as a second step, the reflection about how each country's scenario can enhance and improve its external voting model; at the same time, they are meant to be a guide for the deliberations and future definitions taken by those countries where it has not yet been carried out.

TOPIC 2 – POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN

GENDER QUOTAS AND PROJECTS CONDUCTED BY THE ELECTORAL BODIES PROMOTING THE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN

The 1990s were marked by a process of political transition in Latin America. An era of dictatorial regimes and/or crises of internal armed conflict was followed by the beginnings of the restoration of democracy and its consolidation as a system of government. This process entailed the restoration of foundations of the rule of law and the strengthening of representative democracies with a solid electoral component.

One of the most important aspects of this democratization process, which has taken place in various countries in the region, was the progressive incorporation of women in the electoral process, and the gradual opening of political spaces for them.

Nonetheless, it is important to take into account that the right to political citizenship, a universally applicable right also known as the "right of political participation", encompasses two basic dimensions: 1) the right to elect representatives in government through suffrage and 2)

the right to be elected. , i.e., to public office. With regard to the first dimension, voter participation rates indicate the participation of women as voters has progressively increased in numerous countries in the region. However, in the case of the second dimension, figures show that women have not yet been able to fully penetrate areas of deliberation and decision in public life, nor have their demands been included in political agendas.

From a historical perspective, although women in the hemisphere first gained the right to vote in 1918, it was not until 1980 that a woman first occupied the highest executive office by democratically elected means. That year Dame Mary Eugenia Charles became Prime Minister of Dominica, a position which she held for three terms. As stated in the publication of the IACHR titled *The Path towards Substantive Democracy: for the Political Participation of Women in the Americas* "in spite of the increase in numbers of women in presidential, ministerial, and other positions of national leadership in the last decade, access to these bodies has been slow and exceptional."

Evidently there is a significant gap to be addressed in terms of the access of women to spheres of political representation such as parliament and congress, as well as their ability to hold elected executive positions on both national and local levels.

Analysis on the Application of the two dimensions for Political Rights and Citizenship of Women

1. First Dimension: *The Right to Vote*

The history of women's suffrage varied significantly among countries in the Americas. Canada was the first country in the region to grant women the right to vote, in 1918. In 1964, Bahamas became the last nation to grant this right.

Given that the participation of women in elections is simultaneously a demonstration of their equality as citizens and an expression of their will as voters, the importance of the significant progress that has been made in this regard cannot be overstated. Data indicates that women constitute more than 50% of the electorate and in the voting population in several countries throughout the hemisphere. These positive trends in female voter participation women reflect growing interest in the political and electoral process. This is apparent in Chile, where in the 2006 presidential election (second round), the turnout of women voters was 88.4% and was higher than that of men, which was 85.7%. Similar figures were reported in the 2002 elections in Ecuador (second round), where the participation of women was 72.1%, versus that of men at 70.3%.

Despite their considerable influence in the voting population, women are still consistently under-represented in various areas of the public sector.

2. Second Dimension: *The Right to be Elected: women in public office*

The participation of women in public affairs and equal access to public office has been recognized as a fundamental right by both the Inter-American human rights system, and the universal system for the protection of human rights. However, the participation rates of women

in positions of public authority show that there is a significant gap between the legal recognition of these rights and their realization in practice. Figures from 2011 indicate that on average, out of the 34 OAS Member States, public ministries were made up of 22.3% women i.e., only one in five ministries are women.

The average number of women elected to the lower legislative chamber or unicameral legislature in the hemisphere is 19%; the percentage of women in the 19 countries with an Upper House (Senate) is 23%. These figures reflect a political reality that is far from a balanced and equal participation of women, particularly in light of their influence as voters. Thus, "although women make up half of potential voters in the world, their representation in government and elected office has remained below 50 percent." In Latin America and the Caribbean, this proportion was about 10 percent in 1994.

This issue of under-representation of women in politics was one of the central issues on the agenda of the Fourth World Conference on Women, also known as "Beijing Platform for Action". Precisely, one of the most important developments of the conference was the proclamation that states must take solid actions to correct the disadvantage, inequality and discrimination that women have faced throughout history in the exercise of their political rights.

Some Key Issues in Women's Political Participation

1. Gender quotas

Quotas, also known as affirmative action measures first emerged as transitional measures, temporarily aimed at removing the barriers that prevent women from accessing elected public office. Considering the strong imbalance of political representation between men and women, gender quotas seek to balance the playing field of electoral competition, by either guaranteeing the presence of women as candidates or establishing minimum participation in elected office through the reservation of seats. These measures may be legally imposed or voluntary; the former refers to measures established constitutionally or by law whose compliance is mandatory while the second refers to measures governed by the internal rules of political parties.

Currently, there are only thirteen countries in the Hemisphere (twelve in Latin America and one in the Caribbean) with provisions on quotas or parity for lower house/ single member elections. Five countries have done this for Senate elections. Argentina was the first country in the region to introduce such measures in their legislation in 1991 in order to ensure a minimum number of women (30%) on the electoral lists submitted by political organizations. Throughout the 1990's, several countries adopted similar quota percentages. Nonetheless, the nature of the quota such as requirements for the placement of candidates in competitive positions within party lists or the existence of sanctions for non-compliance with the quota vary significantly from country to country. It is important to note that the effectiveness of quotas, in terms of their ability to ensure that women are elected varies according to the design of these measures, their compatibility with electoral systems, and how they are applied.

However, gender quotas have proven to be an essential tool to encourage political participation of women in the region: "in almost 70 countries worldwide with legislative quotas, voluntary party quotas or reserved seats, the overall representation of women is around 22%, whereas in countries without quotas, the average is around 14%."

In recent years the debate has shifted to measures aimed at ensuring parity. Policies aimed at parity, unlike quotas, imply definitive measures in which men and women have equal representation in state administration. Countries like Ecuador, Bolivia and Costa Rica have moved in the direction of parity through a series of reforms in their legislation.

2. The Electoral System

The electoral system is one of the most important institutional arrangements in the political system. In short, an electoral system means "those rules that transform votes into seats." There are three main electoral systems: majoritarian, proportional representation, and plurality voting.

- a) A majoritarian voting system is an electoral method which involves giving representation to the party of list of candidates chosen by the majority of electors, while denying representation to those that won less than the majority of votes. Historically, the first electoral method to be used, it has been modified or eliminated, due to its perceived non-democratic effects. The electoral competition in this kind of system acquires the features of a zero sum game, understood as "winner takes all" elections. This type of system (also known as 'First-past-the-post) creates conditions under which a party might win a majority of seats (without a majority of votes), sacrificing fair representation at the district level in exchange for the benefit of majority government (e.g.: in Great Britain, where this electoral system prevails; without a majority/First-past-the-post vote, a government cannot be formed) In presidential systems such as the United States, a majority system in the legislature presents obstacles for efficient governance, since the executive and legislature are elected separately and have different mandates.
- b) Proportional representation systems are characterized by the principle of fair representation. The number of seats won by a party or group of candidates is proportional to the number of votes received. As such, this system operates contrary to that of majoritarian systems by foregoing governance requirements for the principle of fair representation.
- c) Plurality voting gives a certain number of seats which are distributed over a majority and a certain number are according to proportional representation (as in the existence of regional districts, or directly from a single district in which national seats are distributed proportionally to the number of votes, as in the case of Germany). The assumption is that in a mixed system, these two principles coexist harmoniously, even at the cost of an apparent democratic conflict in the eyes of the voters, and unequal authority between deputies or senators with or without districts.

International evidence shows that proportional representation systems tend to result in more women being elected than in systems of 'majority rule'. Majority systems entail uninominal districts, in which only one candidate per district can win the election at a time. This in turn leads to higher party magnitudes. Both magnitudes, the district--which is the total number of seats in a constituency--and the party - which refers to the number of seats that each party gets by constituency - affect the strategy of selecting candidates and in increasing opportunities for female candidates to be elected, while allowing greater plurality in the lists³

Countries that have a higher proportion of women in elected positions in Latin America use proportional representation, such as Argentina, Costa Rica and Ecuador. The Spanish-speaking Caribbean and Francophone countries use this same system of PR, while the Anglophone Caribbean uses a majority electoral system. Gender quotas work best in proportional representation electoral systems with magnitudes of medium and large districts.

3. Participation of Women in Political Parties

Political parties remain the main vehicle for political representation in the vast majority of countries in the region. Thus, it is essential to consider the current situation of women's participation in political parties in order to understand, at least in part, their possibilities for being elected. In this respect it should be noted that an analysis of 94 parties in 18 Latin American countries by International IDEA and the IDB in 2009 revealed that party structures do not promote equal opportunities for political participation of men and women. The commitment to gender equality is still weak within political parties.

The same study indicates that while women are actively involved in grassroots politics as militants, constituting around 51 per cent of those enrolled, there are fewer women holding positions at higher levels. In fact, the average percentage of women make in party executive committees is 19%; in terms of presidents and secretaries general the figure is a mere 16%.

4. Political Finance

The regulation of electoral financing can be a key tool to promote gender equity in electoral campaigns. In addition, public funds specifically aimed at female candidates has been the option chosen by some countries to help balance conditions of fairness in the electoral competition of those groups who are at a disadvantage for structural reasons. The following table⁴ lists some global examples of policy measures for gender equality, linked to political financing.

³ Ríos, Marcela. "Cuotas de Género, Democracia y Representación", FLACSO Chile, Santiago, 2006.

⁴ Delia M. Ferreira Rubio, "Financiación política y género en América Latina y el Caribe", Encuentro de Mujeres Parlamentarias, Madrid 15 y 16 de junio del 2009, p.33 http://www.americalatinagenera.org/main/especiales/2009/parlamentarias/documentos/financiamiento_politico_genero.pdf.

Policy measures for gender equality linked to political financing		
Country/Territory	Year	Measure
Costa Rica	1990	Targeted public contribution (without specifying percentage)
Italy	1999	Targeted public contribution (5% of reimbursement)
Panama	2002	Targeted public contribution (2.5% of annual contribution)
France	2003 2007	Penalty on amount of public financing
New Caledonia	2003	Penalty on amount of public financing
Mexico	2007	Targeted public contribution (2% of regular contribution)
Honduras	2007/2008	Targeted public contribution (10% of regular contribution, shared with young people) -Penalty on amount of public contribution

5. The role of the Electoral Authorities in Promoting the Political Participation of Women

An issue that has become increasingly important is the role the Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) play in ensuring women's citizenship rights are respected in the political process. In this sense, there is an influential electoral doctrine, which has gained increasing support from international agencies, whereby it is important to take a gender perspective into consideration in electoral justice. This doctrine accepts the universal equality of voters ("one man, one vote"), discarding votes weighted in accordance with some kind of criterion, while promoting the ideal of "one man, one woman, one vote" in elections.

The principal purpose of this doctrine is for electoral justice to neither ignore nor be blind to the issue of gender. There are countless dimensions of an electoral process that require consideration of the differential conditions affecting men and women. Failure to include these gender-inclusive components impedes the organization of genuine democratic elections. Furthermore, if these components are not observed, it can result in women's participation being significantly undermined.

Electoral Management Bodies must be willing and have the ability to monitor and manage the quota system, to ensure that sanctions are imposed and carried out in cases of non-compliance. Moreover, as a measure to ensure compliance with the quotas, the electoral authorities must, for example, dictate precise regulations as a guide for the implementation of such measures. These regulations can then serve equally as a resource to women to defend and claim their rights.

The electoral bodies should also promote political training for women. Some countries like Panama and Costa Rica have legislation that requires such training. This means that electoral

authorities need to be provided with logistic and financial capacity, as well as specialized personnel in gender issues, in order to be able to contribute significantly to the promotion of women's political participation. In this way, they will be able to strengthen inclusive and representative democratic systems in the region.

6. The role of the OAS designing instruments to observe the participation of women and men in the electoral process:

As a complement to the development of various instruments for the standardization and professionalization of electoral work, the OAS General Secretariat developed the methodology to incorporate a gender perspective in its electoral observation missions. This project means mainstreaming a gender perspective in every aspect of the OAS election observation. The implementation of this methodology allows for the systematic analysis of the participation of men and women in electoral processes at all levels: as voters; as candidates in national and local elections; as leaders in State institutions; within the electoral management bodies; and within the structures of political parties.

With the application of this methodology it is possible to analyze the various factors that directly and indirectly influence the opportunities and obstacles faced by women and men alike, in order for all citizens to participate fairly in political and electoral processes.

ANNEXES

Table 1_ women's suffrage in the Americas

Country	Year	Country	Year
Canadá* ⁵	1918	Barbados	1950
Estados Unidos	1920	Antigua y Barbuda	1951
Ecuador	1929	Dominica	1951
Brasil	1932	Grenada	1951
Uruguay	1932	Santa Lucia	1951
Cuba	1934	San Vicente y las Grenadines	1951
El Salvador (limitado)	1939	Bolivia	1952
República Dominicana	1942	San Kitts y Nevis	1952
Jamaica	1944	México	1953
Guatemala (limitado)	1945	Guyana	1953
Panamá	1945	Honduras	1955
Trinidad y Tobago	1946	Nicaragua	1955
Argentina	1947	Perú	1955
Venezuela	1947	Colombia	1957
Suriname	1948	Paraguay	1961
Chile	1949	Bahamas	1962
Costa Rica	1949	Belice	1964
Haití	1950		

Source: CIM <http://www.oas.org/cim/Spanish/Historia5.htm>

⁵ Excepto en la Provincia de Quebec donde se concedió el derecho al voto a la mujer en el año 1952.

Table 2: Percentage of women in posts of public decision in member countries of the OAS *⁶

Country	Year approved Female vote	Ministries	Parlaments		Local Governments	
			Deputies	Senators	Mayors	Councillors
Antigua y Barbuda	1951	12.5	10.5	29.4	ND	ND
Argentina	1947	18.8	38.5	35.2	10.0	ND
Bahamas	1962	5.6	12.2	33.3	ND	ND
Barbados	1950	12.5	10.0	33.3	ND	ND
Belice	1964	0.0	0.0	38.5	22.2	ND
Bolivia	1952	40.0	25.4	47.2	6.1	13.4
Brasil	1932	25.0	8.6	16.0	9.2	12.6
Canadá	1918	26.3	22.1	34.4	ND	ND
Chile	1949	28.6	14.2	13.2	12.5	21.1
Colombia	1957	30.8	12.7	15.7	9.0	14.5

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⁶ NA: No aplica. ND: Datos no disponibles. ** En Antigua y Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belice, Canadá, Grenada, Jamaica, Santa Lucía y Trinidad y Tobago los Senados se conforman mediante procesos de designación y no por elección popular. ***El 3 de junio de 2009, los Ministros de Relaciones Exteriores de las Américas adoptaron la resolución [AG/RES. 2438 \(XXXIX-O/09\)](#), la cual resuelve que la Resolución de 1962, mediante la cual se excluyó al Gobierno de Cuba de su participación en el sistema interamericano, queda sin efecto en la Organización de los Estados Americanos (OEA). La resolución de 2009 declara que la participación de la República de Cuba en la OEA será el resultado de un proceso de diálogo iniciado a solicitud del Gobierno de la República de Cuba y de conformidad con las prácticas, los propósitos y principios de la OEA ***Este país se encuentra suspendido desde julio de 2009 como miembro de la OEA, en virtud de la Resolución aprobada por la XXXVII Asamblea General Extraordinaria.

Fuente: Elaboración para este Manual en base a información sobre gabinetes ministeriales obtenidos de portales ministeriales por país entre el 10 y 20 de febrero de 2011, información sobre parlamentos obtenida en www.ipu.org el 17 de febrero de 2011, información sobre gobiernos locales obtenidos del Observatorio de Igualdad de Género de América Latina y el Caribe – CEPAL (disponible en <http://www.cepal.org/oig/adecisiones/>) en agosto de 2010 e información sobre tribunales electorales obtenidos de las páginas de Internet de oficiales de cada entidad entre el 15 y 30 de agosto de 2010. Los datos sobre año de aprobación del sufragio femenino han sido extraídos de <http://www.oas.org/cim/Spanish/Historia5.htm>

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NEXT STEPS: FOLLOW-UP TO THE INTER-AMERICAN ELECTORAL SEMINAR

This Inter-American Training Seminars are not designed as training events with definite starts and ends, but rather as continuous training processes which involve diverse activities connected by a common objective: improving the capacities of the electoral authorities.

The first four editions of Training Seminar have involved the participation of 142 officials of electoral bodies from 31 OAS Member State; that number will increase with the holding of the Fifth Seminar. The selection process is designed so that there are no repeat participants, ensuring that the training is imparted to the largest number of staff in various technical areas of the electoral bodies.

One initiative that provides continuity to the work of the Inter-American Electoral Seminar is the “Advanced Course on Electoral Processes in the Americas” developed in collaboration with FLACSO Chile and the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) of Mexico. This Advanced Course is a complementary initiative, through which the OAS General Secretariat hopes to continue

strengthening the technical capacities of electoral authorities, with the aim that this effort will be contribute to the continuous strengthening of democratic systems in the region.

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