CEPPS Gender Assessment Report: Burkina Faso

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CEPPS
Strengthening Democracy Through Partnership

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Executive Summary

Program Background and Assessment Purpose

The purpose of this gender assessment is to inform Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS) program strategies on how to best promote the full and active participation of women in the 2020/2021 election cycles and beyond, including women facing multiple forms of marginalization, such as women internally displaced persons (IDPs). CEPPS is conducting a 20-month long program to promote peaceful, democratic, transparent and inclusive elections in Burkina Faso. This program is working toward the objectives of strengthening election administration, including planning for electoral security, and enabling civil society organizations (CSOs) to better fulfill their role of increasing citizen awareness of and participation in the electoral process. Using CEPPS' gender assessment framework, CEPPS partners conducted a coordinated gender assessment at the outset of the program to look at two primary focus areas: gender and elections, with a specific focus on election administration; and civil society, with a focus on civic and voter education with each CEPPS partner taking the lead on assessing the opportunities and barriers for gender equality and women's participation within their respective program scopes. CEPPS partners used tested, methodical data collection tools and politically-informed analysis to assess the status of women's participation in electoral processes, as well as to provide the following evidence-based recommendations for strengthening the gender responsive, inclusive nature of the election cycle and beyond. CEPPS partners utilized an inductive, mixed-methods approach through desk-based review, key informant interviews, and focus groups.

CEPPS has designed an inclusive monitoring, evaluation, and learning (IMEL) approach to better ensure that an inclusion lens is integrated into all aspects of these processes. As a multi-dimensional, systematic approach utilized across all aspects of the program lifecycle, inclusion creates more responsive, representative and accountable social and political structures in which all individuals, regardless of identity, are able to fully enjoy their human rights and exercise their rights as citizens. CEPPS employs a multi-faceted technical approach to inclusion that includes the following elements:

1) Integrating an inclusive gender analysis into all aspects of program design, implementation, and evaluation that fully considers the ways in which individuals with multiple marginalized identities are uniquely impacted and how this affects both their access and barriers to participation in electoral and political processes;

2) Pursuing a dual track programming approach in which gender equality and social inclusion are both mainstreamed across all activities ***and*** specific activities targeting a particular marginalized group(s) are undertaken; and

3) Throughout the project lifecycle, key inclusion questions are consistently asked in the context of the 3 Ps of Inclusion, or our *partners*, *processes*, and *products*, or deliverables.

An IMEL approach, therefore, is grounded in the important questions and issues that should be addressed from an inclusion perspective throughout the program lifecycle, beginning with gender and baseline assessments.

Key Findings and Recommendations

Gender inequality remains pervasive in Burkina Faso despite efforts to increase the political participation and representation of women. Women and girls face disproportionate barriers and challenges that have been exacerbated by humanitarian crises, including the rise of militant extremist groups and the ongoing

COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, persistent patriarchal cultural norms and harmful discriminatory practices have inhibited progress toward gender equality. While the Burkinabe government has made efforts to address women's participation in the public sphere through laws and policies, such as a gender quota for parliamentary candidate lists, women are still severely underrepresented in politics at the national, regional and community levels and face sharp challenges when attempting to exercise their right to vote. Given the current political landscape in Burkina Faso and the upcoming elections, this report will focus on how electoral and political actors can be more gender inclusive, in particular the National Independent Electoral Commission (*Commission Electorale Nationale Indépendante,* CENI) and civil society organizations. A summary of findings and recommendations – detailed later in the report – is included below.

Category: Election Administration

- *Finding 1-1:* Burkina Faso's National Gender Policy provides a framework with which to promote gender equality, but the CENI lacks its own gender policy and terms of reference for its gender working group and the National Gender Policy does not provide objectives specific to elections.
- *Finding 1-2:* While the CENI has delegated staff to a gender working group, it is not well-resourced and is not able to fully carry out its objectives. Gender integration does not seem to be a priority for CENI leadership.
- *Finding 1-3:* Despite an informal goal of 40 percent women staff members, the CENI falls short on women's representation as election administrators.

Category: Election Day Voter Operations and Services

- *Finding 2-1:* Many women were disenfranchised, long before Election Day, during the voter registration process. Women disproportionately lack access to the identity documents needed to register to vote.
- *Finding 2-2:* When there were problems locating polling stations or locating their names on the voter list on Election Day, women often had to return home to take care of domestic responsibilities, while male voters had more free time to remain engaged and to find solutions.
- *Finding 2-3:* While gender-disaggregated data is required as part of polling station forms, not all poll workers filled out forms correctly, resulting in no nationwide gender-disaggregated data on voter turnout.

Category: Civic and Voter Education

- *Finding 3-1:* Women in rural areas encounter challenges in accessing civic and voter education information. Most interviewees agreed that women in rural areas have minimal access to civic and voter education campaigns due to challenges related to low literacy levels, languages spoken, limited access to media (television, radio, or internet), and restrictive socio-cultural norms. Additionally, women in rural areas often do not have access to social media and access to radio at home is not guaranteed.
- *Finding 3-2:* Civic and voter education does not always account for the socio-cultural barriers that women face. Many interviewees noted that civic and voter education campaigns should address socio-cultural norms as one of the major barriers to women's political participation.

Category: Civil Society

- *Finding 4-1:* Civil society, including at the grassroots level, plays a key role in promoting gender equality and informing women about electoral processes.

Category: Violence Against Women in Politics

- *Finding 5-1:* General insecurity, ongoing violent conflict, and fears of violent extremism were all factors that affected voter turnout and, in particular, that may have kept women from voting in higher numbers.