GENDER-SENSITIVE MEDIA GUIDELINES

FOR COVERAGE OF THE ELECTORAL PROCESS IN

NIGERIA

2018

CONTENTS

BACKGROUND

The engagement of the media in promoting both men and women for political participation has been a critical issue in Nigeria.

Media attention has been prominently concentrated on male politicians while female politicians receive token focus.

This is seen as a continuation of the trend in political institutions characterised by hurdles against the progress and visibility of women.

The overall effect is that a segment which comprises about 50 percent of the population is denied effective participation in the political process. This is a huge democratic deficit which requires urgent redress.

The guidelines in the pages that follow are expected to help improve media engagement in prompting marginalised groups, especially women, to participate in the electoral processes and generally in politics.

Ultimately, this will help achieve the key objective: that the media provide fair, accurate and ethical coverage of the electoral process.

1.1.   INTRODUCTION

Participation in the electoral process and politics in general is powered by elements such as: freedom of expression, assembly and association.

In practical terms, it involves a spectrum of political activities such as registering, voting and/or candidates campaigning, getting elected and holding public office at all levels of government.
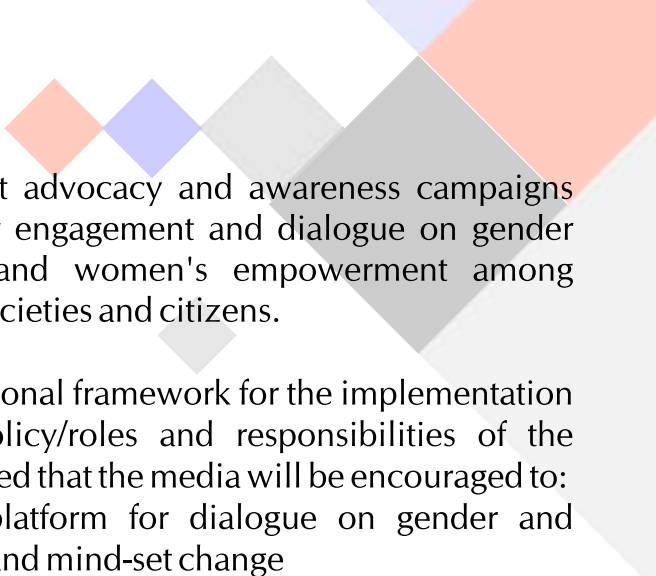
National and international policy frameworks have standards that provide for men and women to enjoy equal right to full participation in the political process. For example,

The National Gender Policy (Nigeria) says:

> A systematic effort to improve knowledge levels and change attitudes of all citizens on gender equality concerns through all communication mediums shall be instituted.
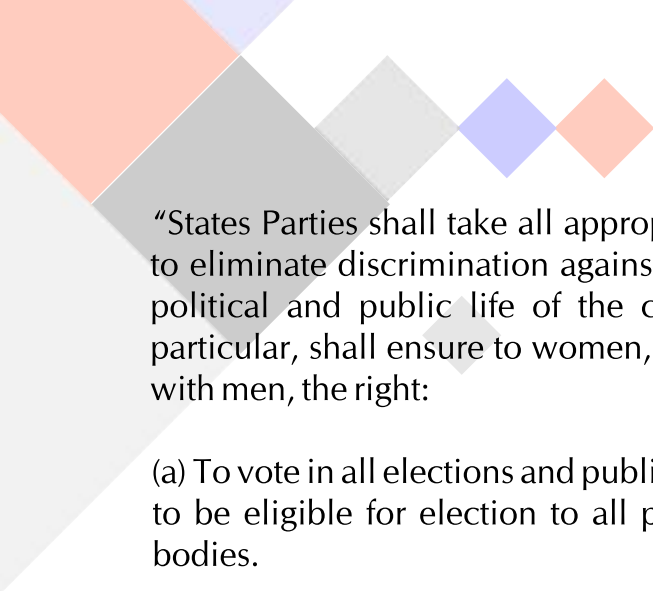
The African Union Gender Policy says:

> AU Organs, RECs and Member States will:

1. Implement advocacy and awareness campaigns and foster engagement and dialogue on gender equality and women's empowerment among Africa's societies and citizens.

   Its institutional framework for the implementation of the policy/roles and responsibilities of the media stated that the media will be encouraged to:
   i. Be a platform for dialogue on gender and relations and mind-set change

   ii. Be partners to eliminate sexist languages and stereotypic representation of women.

   iii. Act as a lobby group to further the gender agenda.

   iv. Be an effective communication channel for dissemination and sensitization at the grassroots.

   v. Promote gender sensitive media coverage and reporting.

   vi. Develop codes of conduct and ethics for equal representation in the media and in decision-making , support media coverage (PART IV).

The UN Convention for the elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) says:

"States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right:
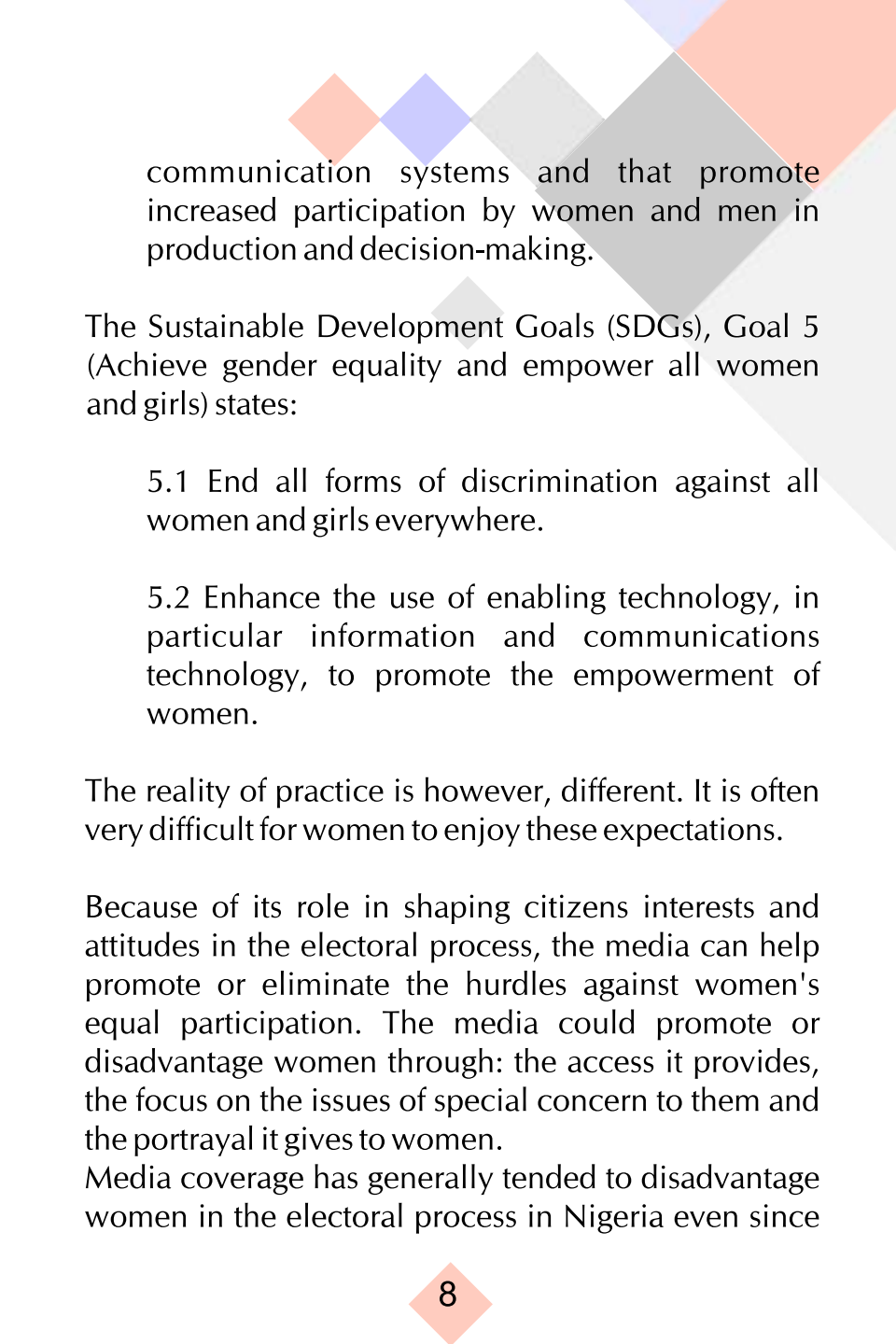
(a) To vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies.

(b) To participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government.

(c)To participate in non-governmental organizations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country" (Article 7)

The Platform for Action (PFA) adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995) stated that: national and international media systems:

Develop, consistent with freedom of expression, regulatory mechanisms, including voluntary ones, that promote balanced and diverse portrayals of women by the media and international

communication systems and that promote increased participation by women and men in production and decision-making.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Goal 5 (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls) states:
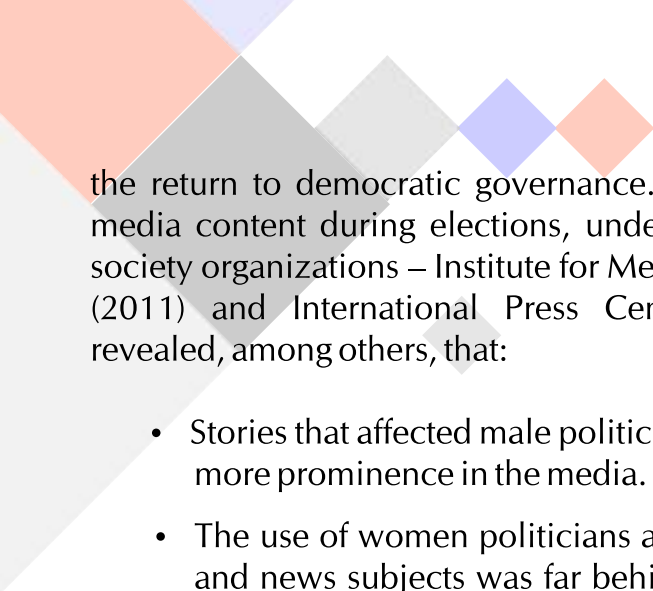
5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.

5.2 Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women.

The reality of practice is however, different. It is often very difficult for women to enjoy these expectations.

Because of its role in shaping citizens interests and attitudes in the electoral process, the media can help promote or eliminate the hurdles against women's equal participation. The media could promote or disadvantage women through: the access it provides, the focus on the issues of special concern to them and the portrayal it gives to women.

Media coverage has generally tended to disadvantage women in the electoral process in Nigeria even since

the return to democratic governance. Monitoring of media content during elections, undertaken by civil society organizations – Institute for Media and Society (2011) and International Press Centre (in 2015) revealed, among others, that:

- Stories that affected male politicians were given more prominence in the media.

- The use of women politicians as news sources and news subjects was far behind that of their male counterparts.

These revelations are strong indications of a major deficit in democratic political practices in Nigeria, and they must be addressed with utmost urgency in line with international standards and best practices.

To bridge this gap, these guidelines have been put together by representatives of core stakeholder, institutions such as: Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Nigeria Association of Women Journalists (NAWOJ), Radio, Television, Theatre and Arts Workers Union (RATTAWU), Nigerian Guild of Editors (NGE), The Academia and Civil Society Organisations (CSO).
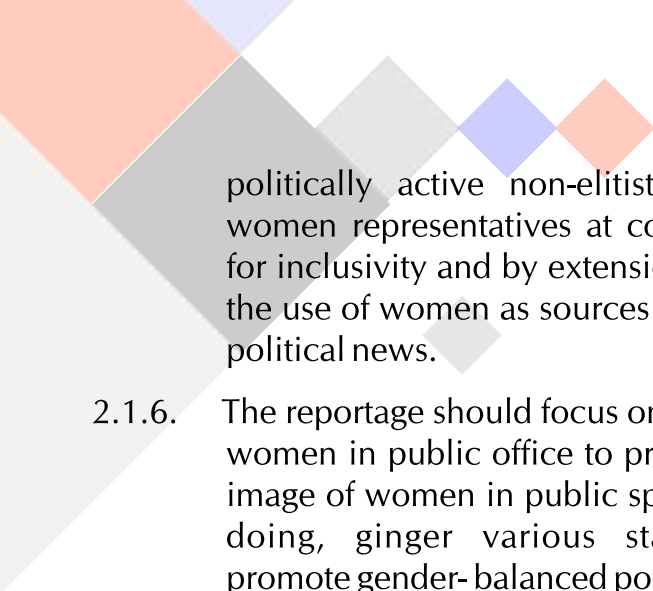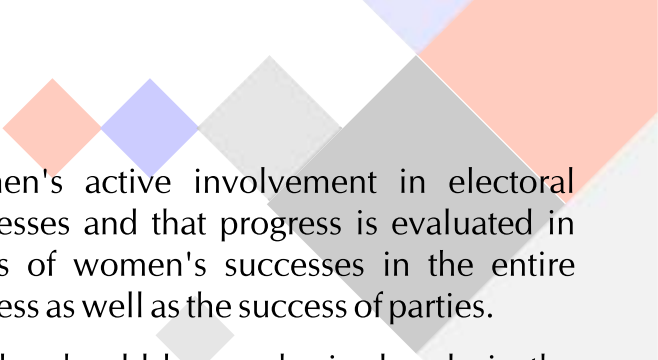
GUIDELINES FOR COVERAGE: REPORTORIAL

2.1.   ACCESSIBILITY AND VISIBILITY

2.1.1.   Journalists must at all times uphold the tenets of ethical journalism, with regards to political reportage. In particular, journalists must be objective, fair, balanced, truthful, accurate and gender-friendly.

2.1.2.   Journalists covering politics should be conscious of gender imbalance in the political process and fill the gap using gender-sensitive and gender-balance principles across all their reports

2.1.3.   News reports and features should use gender-friendly sources. Special consideration should be given to women's voices and their views balanced with those of male counterparts.

2.1.4.   Reporters should interpret through their reports to show if there has been a shift in coverage of women in politics.

2.1.5.   Stories should focus on experienced women,

politically active non-elitist women, and women representatives at community level for inclusivity and by extension, improve on the use of women as sources and subjects of political news.

2.1.6.   The reportage should focus on the exploits of women in public office to project a positive image of women in public sphere and by so doing, ginger various stakeholders to promote gender- balanced politics.

2.1.7.   Journalists should investigate women's needs, constraints, responsibilities, priorities and develop appropriate programmes to push for gender equitable representation in media contents and ultimately in decision making.

2.1.8.   Journalists should use the information gathered about women politicians/aspirants/candidates to improve the visibility of women in political stories. Stories should be planned specifically to spotlight women politicians/ aspirants/candidates; and should include goals and milestones that account for women's participation.

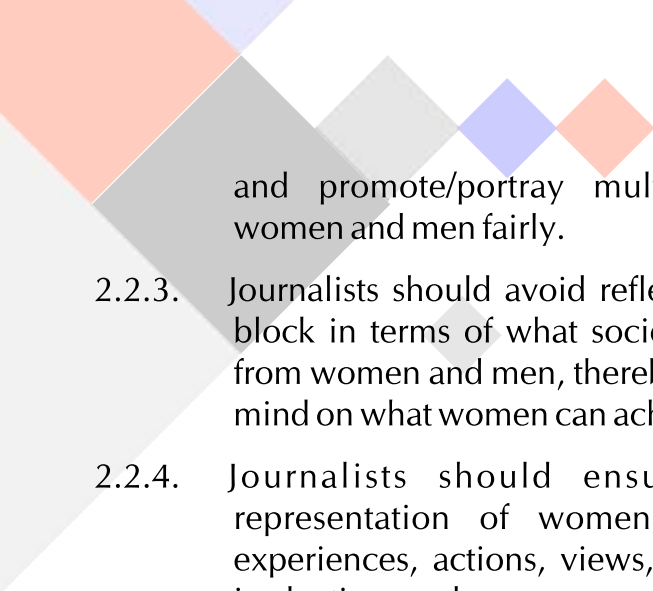2.1.9.   Journalists should ensure that stories include

women's active involvement in electoral processes and that progress is evaluated in terms of women's successes in the entire process as well as the success of parties.

2.1.10. Gender should be emphasised early in the development of story line to avoid bolt-on modifications after substantial design work has been done

2.1.11. Data gathering should address/speak to the perspectives and concerns of men and women in politics.

2.1.12. When data used for reports are from online sources, use relevant verifiable tools to fact-check the data for credibility and integrity.

2.1.13. Research on issues in politics should be presented using a gender lens; and the sources of data must be credible.

2.1.14. Editorials should promote gender issues on electoral processes.

2.2. PORTRAYAL

2.2.1. Political reports should reflect fairness of men and women – images and voices

2.2.2. Political reports should eliminate stereotypes

and promote/portray multiple roles of women and men fairly.

2.2.3.   Journalists should avoid reflecting a mental block in terms of what society may expect from women and men, thereby limiting their mind on what women can achieve.

2.2.4.   Journalists should ensure balanced representation of women's and men's experiences, actions, views, and concerns, in elections and governance.

2.2.5.   Sex related vices such as barrenness, adultery, rape, lesbianism or prostitution shall not be presented in relation to women's political aspiration in contents.

2.2.6.   Profane, obscene, derogatory and vulgar representations should not be used to demean women in reports.

2.2.7.   Physical abuse, violence, psychological harm and their consequences should not be upheld as subversive themes to women in poilitics

2.2.8.   Social stigmas and taboo symbols associated with societal construction of women should be eschewed in media reports.

2.2.9.   Do not use images that depict women as

sexual objects in political reports.

2.3.   LANGUAGE

2.3.1.   Words must be carefully selected to give a more accurate reflection of women's political strength and potentials in media reports.

2.3.2.   Reports should avoid proclamations festering religious/gender biases in favour of men over women in politics.

2.3.3.   Be gender sensitive in the use of language while reporting politics.

2.3.4.   Language of reportage should take cognizance of cultural interpretations and devoid of adjectives and stereotypes that debase women.

2.3.5.   Journalists should avoid languages that misrepresent, exclude or offend the sensibilities of women in politics.
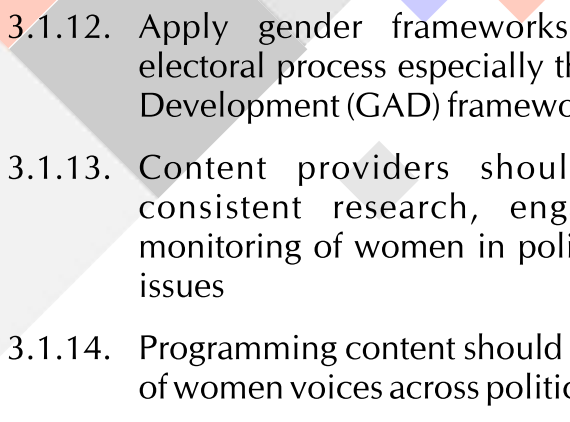
3.0. GUIDELINES FOR COVERAGE - PROGRAMMING
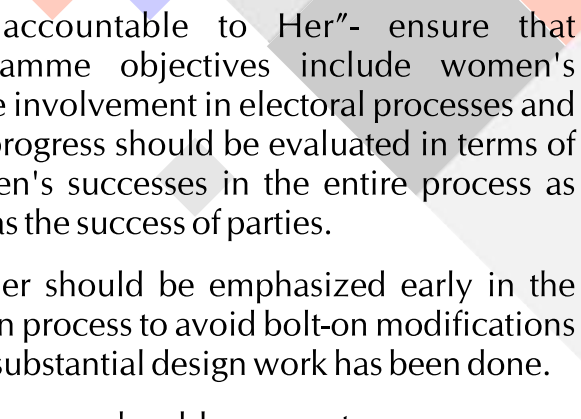
3.1. ACCESSIBILITY AND VISIBILITY

3.1.2. Producers must at all times develop political contents that are objective, fair, balanced, truthful, accurate and gender friendly.

3.1.3. Programmes should use gender-friendly sources. Special consideration should be given to women to feature in programmes and balance their views against their male counterparts

3.1.4. Content providers should create platforms to allow women share their victories and challenges in the political journey through a variety of programme formats such as discussions, documentaries, magazines, drama, vox-pop, phone-in, interviews and location reports

3.1.5. Programmes should focus on older women, politically active non-elitist women, and women representatives at community level

for inclusivity and hence improvement in the use of women as sources and subjects.

3.1.6.   Programmes should focus on exploits of women in public office to project a positive image of women in public sphere to ginger various stakeholders to promote gender balanced politics.

3.1.7.   For gender diversity in programming, contents should be laced with the voices of gender experts.

3.1.8.   Physical abuse, violence, psychological harm and their consequences should not be upheld as subversive themes to women's interest in political programmes.

3.1.9.   Identify and promote women who have achieved great feats in leadership positions as mentors to upcoming aspirants.

3.1.10. Create and/or expand programmes for improved coverage of women in politics.

3.1.11. Exploit appropriate gender-based policies such as the national gender policy, African Charter on Human Rights, SDG5, INEC gender policy, UN council resolution 1325, to generate reports for greater awareness and inclusivity of women in politics awareness and inclusivity of women in politics.

3.1.12.   Apply gender frameworks in reporting electoral process especially the Gender And Development (GAD) framework.

3.1.13.   Content providers should engage in consistent research, engagement and monitoring of women in politics and media issues

3.1.14.   Programming content should reflect diversity of women voices across political spectra.

3.1.15.   Adopt the "Know Her" programming technique/political programmes should take into account the context and circumstances of women politicians/aspirants

3.1.16.   Producers should investigate women's needs, constraints, responsibilities, priorities and anticipate how to use programmes to push for gender equitable representation in media contents and ultimately in decision making

3.1.17.   "Design for Her"- programmes should use the information collected about politicians/aspirants to inform programme design. Programmes should be designed specifically to reach and benefit women politicians/aspirants; and they should include goals and milestones that account for women's participation

3.1.18. "Be accountable to Her"- ensure that programme objectives include women's active involvement in electoral processes and that progress should be evaluated in terms of women's successes in the entire process as well as the success of parties.

3.1.19. Gender should be emphasized early in the design process to avoid bolt-on modifications after substantial design work has been done.

3.1.20. Producers should generate programme contents that speaks to the interests, perspectives and concerns of men and women in politics.

3.1.21. Audience research should address/speak to the perspectives and concerns of men and women in politics.

3.1.22. When data used for reports are from online sources, use relevant verifiable tools to fact-check the data for credibility and integrity.

3.1.23. Research on issues in politics should be presented using a gender lens; and the sources of data must be credible.

3.1.24. Commentaries should promote gender issues on electoral processes.

3.2.   PORTRAYAL

3.2.1.   Political contents should reflect fairness of men and women – images and voices.

3.2.2.   Content producers should eliminate stereotypes and promote/portray multiple roles of women and men fairly.

3.2.3.   Presenters should avoid reflecting a mental block in terms of what society may expect from women and men, thereby limiting their mind on what they can achieve.

3.2.4.   Content producers should ensure balanced representation of women's and men's experiences, actions, views, and concerns, in elections and governance.

3.2.5.   Sex related vices such as barrenness, adultery, rape, lesbianism or prostitution shall not be presented in relation to women's political aspiration in contents

3.2.6.   Profane, obscene, derogatory and vulgar representations should not be used to demean women in contents.

3.2.7.   Social stigmas and taboo symbols associated with societal construction of women should be eschewed in media content.

3.2.8.   Do not use images that depict women as sexual objects in political contents.

3.3.   LANGUAGE

3.3.1.   Words must be carefully selected to give a more accurate reflection of women's political strength and potentials in broadcast presentation.

3.3.2.   Programmes should avoid proclamations festering religious/gender biases in favor of men over women in politics.

3.3.3.   Be gender sensitive in language use during content production.

3.3.4.   Language of production should take cognisance of cultural interpretations and be devoid of adjectives and stereotypes that debase women.

3.3.5.   Presenters should avoid languages that misrepresents, excludes or offends the sensibilities of women in politics.

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European Union