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## 16. Electoral quotas and group representation

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Academic and policy debates around the world increasingly recognize the importance of descriptive representation, observing that a variety of groups are under-represented in the electoral process in relation to their share of the general population. In a growing number of countries, these discussions have resulted in the introduction of quotas to encourage or guarantee the participation of selected groups. The vast majority of these measures address women's representation, with political parties and national parliaments in more than 130 states mandating the greater inclusion of women as political candidates and/or elected officials. Policies for other groups – based on language, religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, caste, age, expatriation, profession and disability – exist in approximately 40 countries (Krook and O'Brien 2010).

This chapter provides an introduction to group-based quotas and their impact on dynamics of political representation. The first section maps these measures globally, outlining key variations in their design and the contexts in which they have been adopted. The second section identifies three normative dilemmas raised by quotas related to questions of equality, democracy and group recognition. The next four sections review the state of existing research on quotas and the four dimensions of representation theorized by Pitkin (1967): formalistic, descriptive, substantive and symbolic. Based on this review, the final section charts new frontiers in quota research. As most of the current literature focuses on gender quotas, the discussion highlights the need for more studies on the adoption and impact of quotas for other groups. It also points to the importance of further research on the intersectional effects of quotas, in order to better understand how quotas may mitigate or exacerbate other group-based inequalities.

### QUOTAS AROUND THE WORLD

Quotas have been implemented for a wide range of groups worldwide. Despite theoretical works developing criteria to identify groups in need of descriptive representation (Mansbridge 1999; Williams 1998), as well as empirical studies linking quota types to innate features of group identities (Htun 2004), global patterns reveal a great deal of diversity in the groups recognized as politically salient – as well as their modes of recognition. Closer analysis of the circumstances surrounding quota adoption, moreover, points to a variety of circumstances in which quotas are introduced. Together, these trends suggest that proposals for group quotas emerge through the active construction of 'relevant' political identities, processes which may vary widely across national and regional contexts (Krook and O'Brien 2010).

#### **Quotas for Women**

Electoral gender quotas take three main forms: reserved seats, party quotas and legislative quotas (Krook 2009). Reserved seats set aside places in political assemblies for women. Early policies of this type – appearing in countries such as India, Pakistan and Taiwan – mandated

a low proportion, less than 10 per cent. More recent measures guarantee as many as one-third to half of all seats for women, as in Rwanda, Tanzania, and some states in India. Party and legislative quotas, in contrast, apply to the share of women among political candidates rather than the proportion of women elected. Party quotas entail pledges by individual parties to include a minimum percentage of women, most commonly between 25 and 50 per cent, on their electoral slates. In Norway, for example, the Norwegian Labour Party has a 50 per cent quota, while the Socialist Left Party, the Centre Party, and the Christian People's Party all have 40 per cent quotas. Legislative quotas are measures passed by national parliaments requiring that all parties nominate a certain proportion of women. In the 1990s and 2000s, most quota laws mandated 30 per cent female candidates. Over the last ten years, however, many countries, especially in Latin America, have increased their policies from 30 to 50 per cent. At the same time, a growing number of first-time adopters, such as Senegal and Tunisia, are opting for parity from the start.<sup>1</sup>

As a result of their widespread global diffusion, gender quotas appear in countries with varied institutional, social, economic and cultural characteristics. Nonetheless, some patterns are evident in relation to quota adoption. First, specific quota types prevail in different regions. Reserved seats are concentrated in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. Party quotas are most common in Europe, as well as among leftist parties around the world. Legislative quotas dominate in Latin America, but are also found in Africa and Europe, especially in post-conflict contexts. Second, adoption dates indicate clustering over time. Ten states established policies for women between 1930 and 1980, followed by 12 countries in the 1980s. In the 1990s, however, measures for women appeared in more than 50 countries, which have been joined by over 40 more since 2000 (Krook 2006). Third, intersecting with these trends, specific quota types have predominated at distinct moments in time. Reserved seats were the main quota type between 1930 and 1970. In comparison, party quotas first appeared in the early 1970s, but grew more widespread in the 1980s and 1990s. Legislative quotas emerged in the 1990s, but soon gained momentum and constitute the majority of quotas adopted today. These regional and temporal patterns point to the possibility of learning across national borders, as well as the consolidation of a new global norm in favour of gender-balanced decision-making (Hughes et al. 2015).

### **Quotas for Racial and Ethnic Minorities**

Quotas for racial and ethnic minorities exist in fewer states, but with a few exceptions<sup>2</sup> they take the form of reserved seats (Htun 2004). Due to national and regional variations in definitions of 'race' and 'ethnicity', however, the specific groups identified for special measures range widely from one context to another. In countries such as Colombia and New Zealand, seats are allocated to members of indigenous groups (Geddis 2006; Van Cott 2005). Across Eastern Europe, ethnic policies ensure representation for small national communities. In Croatia, these include seats for ethnic Hungarians, Italians, Czechs and Slovaks, and Serbs, among others (Krook and O'Brien 2010). In still other cases, groups receiving guarantees are defined by religion, language and class. In Pakistan, a small percentage of seats are reserved for Hindus and Christians, for instance, while in Lebanon, all seats in parliament are divided equally between Christians and Muslims (Salloukh 2006). Belgium divides seats in its upper house among three linguistic groups, Flemish, French and German (O'Neill 1998). India, finally, allocates seats for members of Scheduled Castes and Tribes (Galanter 1984).

As reserved seats, these measures address the number of individuals elected, making them stronger guarantees of presence than most quotas for women. These measures tend to have one of two goals: protection or power-sharing. Protection entails allocating seats to groups which constitute a relatively small contingent within the population, including indigenous peoples, members of minority religions and nationalities, and class- or caste-based groups. These provisions are generally minimal, involving as few as 1 or 2 per cent of seats (Reynolds 2005). Aiming to compensate for past oppression, including colonialism, these measures typically over-represent the minority in question (Htun 2004). Power-sharing arrangements, in contrast, involve dividing up most or all seats between two or more factions, defined by ethnicity, religion or language. These policies entail a higher proportion of seats, often as much as 25 to 70 per cent, with the goal being to ensure democratic stability in a divided society – often in the wake of conflict as a means of national reconciliation – by granting group members a guaranteed voice in the political system (Krook and O’Brien 2010). While distinct, the two categories of measures share similar patterns of adoption over time, being popular in the years following World War II and then again in the 1990s (Reynolds 2005).

### **Quotas for Young People**

Youth quotas have been established in a small but growing number of countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Middle East. These measures take the same three forms as quotas for women: reserved seats, party quotas and legislative quotas. In Rwanda and Morocco, nearly 8 per cent of seats are reserved for young people, defined as under the ages of 35 and 40, respectively. In other cases, such as Kenya and Uganda, the share of seats is far smaller, between 1 and 3 per cent of all seats. Party quotas are the most common form of youth quota, appearing in party statutes in more than 15 countries. These policies are highly diverse, ranging between 10 and 30 per cent of candidates, and encompass a wide range of age limits, from under 30 to under 40. Youth quotas in Sweden – where multiple parties have instituted 25 per cent youth quotas and targets – appear to be the most effective, based on the share of parliamentarians under the age of 30 (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2018, p. 26). Legislative quotas have been introduced in a more limited array of states. These measures vary from 15 to 25 per cent and apply to candidates under the ages of 35 to 40. In Tunisia, for example, parties must place at least one candidate under the age of 35 among the first four candidates on their lists. In Egypt, parties must nominate a minimum of 16 candidates under the age of 35 across the four electoral districts.

Countries have followed several different paths to adoption. In some contexts, youth quotas are perceived by elites as a way to promote greater inclusivity and stability in the wake of dramatic political upheavals (Belschner 2018; Muriaas and Wang 2012). Youth quotas in Uganda, Rwanda and Kenya surfaced after these countries emerged from armed conflict. In Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt, quotas for young people were included in constitutional reforms enacted after the Arab Spring. Elsewhere, young activists have been strong advocates for youth quotas, as in Peru, where they framed these measures as a crucial alternative to a ‘gerontocratic’ political system (Reyes 2015). A consistent pattern across these diverse cases, however, is that quotas for youth tend to be adopted together with, or subsequent to, quotas for women (Belschner 2020). Notably, all of the existing reserved seat provisions have a gender component, mandating that a woman occupy at least one of the seats reserved for youth. In two instances, a party quota in Nicaragua and the legislative quota in the Philippines, the policies

establish a single quota for women and youth together. In other cases, youth and gender quotas apply in a parallel but separate fashion (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2018).

### **Quotas for People with Disabilities**

Quotas for people with disabilities are less common than quotas based on gender, race and ethnicity, and youth. Nonetheless, they coexist with these measures in several countries. One of the first states to establish such a quota was Uganda, where the 1995 Constitution mandated that the state ensure the fair representation of marginalized groups in all government bodies. Currently, five of the 458 seats in parliament are reserved for people with disabilities (approximately 1 per cent of all seats), and every village, parish, sub-county and district council must include at least one man and one woman with a disability. A national electoral college of people with disabilities, with four representatives from each electoral district, selects those who will occupy the five reserved seats in parliament.<sup>3</sup> Rwanda and Egypt similarly reserve about 1 per cent of seats in parliament for people with disabilities. While the method for choosing these representatives in Rwanda is similar to that employed in Uganda, the system in Egypt is more complex. Of the 596 members of parliament, 448 seats are filled through majoritarian elections, 120 are elected through party lists, and 28 are appointed by the president. For the purposes of the list component, the country is divided into four constituencies: two 15-member constituencies and two 45-member constituencies. In the former, at least one person with disabilities must be included on each list; in the latter, at least three must be nominated. Parties receiving more than 50 per cent of the vote are awarded all the constituency's seats, ensuring the election of at least eight candidates with disabilities to parliament (Völkel 2017).

Countries with quotas for people with disabilities tend to establish quotas for a wide range of social groups, suggesting that the goal of these measures is to ensure broad-ranging social diversity in political institutions. In Uganda, for example, seats in parliament are also reserved for women, youth, organized labour, and the army. In Egypt, the list of groups is even longer, including women, Copts (an ethnoreligious minority), youth, workers and farmers, and expatriates.

### **Quotas for Other Groups**

A number of additional groups also enjoy reserved seats in parliaments around the world. These include nomadic tribes, for whom reserved seats are necessary because they lack fixed addresses, and thus would not be adequately represented through a traditional geography-based constituency system. Instances include the Kuchi nomads in Afghanistan (4 per cent of seats) and Bedouin tribes in Jordan (8 per cent). For slightly different geographic reasons, other countries – spread across Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America – reserve seats in parliament for expatriates. The greatest share of such seats (8 per cent) is found in Cape Verde, a small island nation off the coast of West Africa with a large global diaspora. A final, far more limited, category of representation is occupation. In addition to reserved seats for the army in Uganda and workers and farmers in Egypt, Rwanda reserves seats in parliament for university professors (Krook and O'Brien 2010).

## NORMATIVE DILEMMAS

Although group-based quotas have been widely adopted around the world, doubts are often expressed about their legitimacy and legality. Quotas are controversial in at least three ways: (1) they encourage affirmative action in candidate selection procedures, provoking a conflict between competing principles of equality; (2) they promote identities over ideas, leading some to argue that they undermine democracy; and (3) they recognize some, but not all, identities as categories of political representation (Krook et al. 2009). Awareness of the ‘false universalism’ behind these neutral-sounding concepts, however, offers a means forward by highlighting how dynamics of privilege and oppression are inflected in these debates, with traditional understandings reinforcing – rather than undermining – prevailing patterns of exclusion (Young 1990).

### Equality

‘Equality’ is a highly contested concept. Competing views, however, typically contrast equality of opportunities with equality of results (Dahlerup 2007). Stressing equal opportunities tends to favour individual-level explanations of unequal outcomes. From this perspective, citizens enjoy legal equality – and thus, their inability to achieve equality in practice stems from their own personal failures. Prospects for change, in turn, are viewed solely in terms of individual initiative. Emphasizing equal results, in comparison, entails recognizing that some inequalities may in fact be structural. In the face of such systemic barriers, legal equality may not suffice to guarantee substantive equality. Instead, group-based solutions like quotas may be necessary to tackle the broader structures – including discrimination and prejudice – preventing truly equal opportunities for all.

### Democracy

Notions of democracy are typically rooted in concepts of substantive representation, or what Phillips (1995) terms the ‘politics of ideas’, whereby representatives act on behalf of and according to the ideas of those who are represented. Quotas, however, seek to acknowledge the importance of the ‘politics of presence’, suggesting that representatives – as a whole – should mirror the composition of the population in terms of relevant characteristics. Until recently, the lack of descriptive representation was not viewed as a problem for the legitimacy of political institutions – or, indeed, for definitions of ‘democracy’ itself (Paxton 2000). Despite the fact that many scholars view ‘inclusion’ as central to the normative concept of democracy, this insight has not generally been incorporated into analyses assessing the democratic character of different regimes (but see Wang et al. 2017).

The widespread diffusion of quotas has pushed these debates in new directions over the last two decades. On the one hand, quotas have been criticized as ‘artificial’ solutions that violate the rights of voters to select their preferred candidates (Dahlerup 2007), overlooking the fact that parties play a strong role in structuring the options available to voters through candidate selection procedures. On the other hand, quotas have become increasingly central to democracy promotion efforts worldwide (Bush 2011). Yet quotas may serve a variety of strategic purposes for political elites in both democratic and authoritarian contexts, both deepening inclusion and political engagement as well as reinforcing the authoritarian status quo (Bush

and Jamal 2015; Muriaas and Wang 2012). Democracy may thus be needed for quotas to be meaningful, given that high representation via quotas may not translate into real political power in authoritarian regimes.

### **Group Recognition**

Theoretical work on group representation has sought to identify criteria to determine which groups might have a 'case' for increased descriptive representation. Williams (1998), for instance, outlines four such group characteristics: where patterns of inequality are structured along the lines of group membership; membership is not usually experienced as voluntary; membership is not usually experienced as mutable; and negative meanings are assigned to group identity by the broader society. In the case of the United States, she argues that African Americans and women offer 'paradigmatic examples' of groups with 'strong moral claims for recognition' (1998, p. 17). Yet there are significant variations across countries in terms of which groups actually receive representational guarantees, raising questions about innate characteristics and group recognition. What patterns of quota adoption suggest, instead, is that groups gain quotas when they are actively constructed as 'relevant' political identities – a tendency that becomes evident when comparing quota adoption patterns across cases, and especially across groups (Krook and O'Brien 2010).

## **QUOTAS AND FORMALISTIC REPRESENTATION**

In her seminal book, Pitkin (1967) theorizes four types of political representation: formalistic, descriptive, substantive and symbolic. Formalistic representation refers to methods of authorization and accountability, conferring the authority to act on behalf of others, together with the means to hold representatives to account for their actions. In democratic systems, elections provide these mechanisms, shaping who is elected and re-elected (or not) to political office. Research on gender quotas quickly identified electoral systems as a key factor influencing the effectiveness of these policies (Jones 1998). This work noted that proportional representation (PR) systems tended to facilitate the introduction and application of quotas, given the existence of party lists and the possibility to nominate multiple candidates in each district. In contrast, majoritarian, first-past-the-post (FPTP) systems were organized around single candidates in each district, making it less clear how to institute quotas – as well as bringing into sharper focus their zero-sum nature, with male aspirants in some instances needing to give way in favour of female candidates.

Differences in electoral systems, together with variations in policy design, have produced wide variations in quota effectiveness; some countries have witnessed strong increases, while others have seen more modest changes or even setbacks in the proportion of women elected (Krook 2009). Quotas tend to be more successful in increasing the share of women elected when implemented in PR systems with closed lists and high district magnitudes (Caul 1999; Jones 2009). Some scholars argue, however, that variations across closed- and open-list PR are due to institutional variables other than electoral systems per se, most notably the use of placement mandates for quotas in closed-list systems that are not possible when quotas are applied in open-list systems (Schmidt 2009). This perspective is consistent with studies showing that quotas are most effective when they require at least 30 per cent female candidates, include

placement provisions ensuring that women are placed in winnable list positions, and impose strong sanctions for non-compliance (Schwindt-Bayer 2009; Rosen 2017). Given a plethora of case-study evidence indicating strong resistance among elites to implementing quota provisions (Krook 2016), such mechanisms are crucial for translating quotas into practice, even in presumably favourable institutional contexts. At the same time, some quotas – notably reserved seats – can also contribute to an increased share of women in parliament in countries using FPTP (Rosen 2017; Yoon 2008), suggesting that quota design can overcome some of the barriers associated with electoral system dynamics.

## QUOTAS AND DESCRIPTIVE REPRESENTATION

Descriptive representation concerns the composition of political assemblies, particularly in relation to its social characteristics. Initial work on gender quotas focused primarily on the numbers of women elected as a result of quota policies (Krook 2009). Emerging research on youth quotas has also taken up this question as it relates to young members of parliament (MPs). These measures employ a wide range of age thresholds. Data from the Inter-Parliamentary Union (2018) finds that youth quotas, as a whole, appear to have a largely negligible impact on the share of MPs under 30, with only a third of countries with youth quotas electing more than the global average: El Salvador, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Mexico, Montenegro, Romania, Tunisia, Sweden and Ukraine. However, states with youth quotas elect a far greater share of parliamentarians under the age of 40 – a pattern suggesting that the individuals benefiting from these quotas are most likely to be near the upper limits of their age groups. Research on other group quotas is less developed, in contrast, but this probably stems from the fact that most of these measures involve reserved seats, which guarantee the descriptive presence of these groups.

More recent developments in the gender quota literature, however, point to promising new research directions on the topic of descriptive representation for all groups. This work explores who is elected as a result of gender quotas, taking into account other aspects of group identity. In France, for example, Murray (2010) finds that women entering parliament for the first time as a result of gender quotas were on average younger than new male entrants. Analysing trends in more than 80 countries, Hughes (2011) observes that gender quotas typically lead to the election of majority-ethnic women, while quotas for ethnic minorities usually contribute to the election of minority-ethnic men. When ‘tandem quotas’ are used, however, ethnic minority women tend to benefit. Going one step further, some studies consider further attributes like education and occupation. In Morocco, nearly all female MPs elected via quotas had received higher education and nearly half had earned a doctoral degree (Sater 2007). In Argentina, many women entered parliament with professional backgrounds as teachers, shifting the balance of occupations among legislators overall (Franceschet and Piscopo 2012).

## QUOTAS AND SUBSTANTIVE REPRESENTATION

Substantive representation refers to attention to group interests in policy-making. Franceschet and Piscopo (2008) theorize two ways in which quotas might alter existing dynamics of policy advocacy. One possibility is a ‘mandate effect’, whereby female legislators elected through

quotas sense a special obligation to act on behalf of women. These perceived mandates emerge as a result of arguments made during quota campaigns that female representatives are needed in order to introduce new perspectives in policy-making, including passing laws beneficial to women as a group. The other possibility, however, is a 'label effect', whereby women promoted via quotas experience a feeling of stigma attached to the mode of selection, leading them to avoid pursuing women's issues in an effort to establish themselves as 'serious politicians'. These dynamics are rooted in negative stereotypes about 'quota women' – as less experienced, less capable, and blindly loyal to male party leaders – affecting how they are viewed by colleagues and the public at large. Franceschet and Piscopo (2008) propose that individual women may respond to these two effects in different ways, shaping prospects for substantive representation of women's policy concerns in the wake of quota adoption.

Research finds support for both effects. In Rwanda, a comparison of female parliamentarians in reserved and non-reserved seats finds that those elected through quotas were far more likely to report feeling obligated to act for women as a group (Schwartz 2004). Employing a different research design, Xydias (2008) observes that party quotas in Germany led female legislators to speak more frequently and extensively on women's issues in parliamentary debates, above and beyond effects attributable to gender differences alone. Evidence from Uganda tempers these conclusions, however, finding more differences in legislative behaviour – measured in terms of participation in parliamentary debates on women's issues – between male and female MPs than among quota and non-quota women (Clayton et al. 2017).

In terms of label effects, interviews in the United Kingdom reveal that – at least initially – women elected via quotas in the late 1990s felt a need to dissociate themselves from these measures and women's issues more broadly, leading to charges that they had 'failed women' (Childs 2004). Interviews conducted in later years with these same women, however, indicate a change in perceptions over the course of their parliamentary careers. Many women moved in the direction of mandate effects as they became more experienced and the perceived stigma attached to being a quota woman lessened over time (Childs and Krook 2012). At the same time, studies disaggregating the policy process provide a more nuanced picture of women's policy impact; in countries as diverse as Rwanda and Argentina, quotas are associated with a sharp rise in the introduction of women-friendly policy proposals, even if they have rarely altered policy outcomes (Devlin and Elgie 2008; Franceschet and Piscopo 2008).

## QUOTAS AND SYMBOLIC REPRESENTATION

Symbolic representation captures the cultural meanings and ramifications of the representative process. Existing work on gender quotas operationalizes symbolic representation in two ways: public attitudes towards women's political leadership and trends in women's political engagement. Research in the first vein explores whether quotas alter traditional gendered views of women as political actors. The most extensive evidence on this question comes from India, where the lottery system used to designate districts reserved for women creates a 'natural experiment', allowing scholars to isolate the effects of quotas versus other factors. Comparing districts where seats had never been reserved for women, those where seats had been reserved once, and those where seats had been reserved twice, Beaman et al. (2009) find that longer exposure to female leaders as a result of quotas can weaken gender stereotypes and eliminate negative bias in how the performance of female leaders is perceived among male constituents.



However, work on other cases, such as Finland and Belgium, reveals that public acceptance of quotas can mask continued resistance, especially among male elites, regarding their legitimacy as a measure for overcoming gender inequality (Holli et al. 2006; Meier 2008). According to data from Latin America, citizen support for quotas – especially among men – is higher in countries with higher good governance indicators, signalling the importance of institutional performance in legitimizing quotas as a mechanism of representation (Barnes and Córdova 2016).

Studies on women's political engagement theorize that the election of more women via quotas may signal greater inclusiveness of the political system, inspiring ordinary women to get more politically involved. Although early work on Latin America found that quotas had little or no effect on women's political activities (Zetterberg 2009), more recent research suggests that the adoption of quotas has contributed to diminishing gender gaps in political participation across sub-Saharan Africa (Barnes and Burchard 2013). Further, evidence from India indicates that quota adoption encourages women to enter politics, acquire political skills, and develop sustained political ambitions. When districts reserved for women were subsequently de-reserved in the next elections, women were far more likely to run for office in these constituencies than in districts that had never been reserved for women – an effect driven largely by women's decisions to run for re-election, this time against men (Bhavnani 2009). Some research also observes effects on women's empowerment outside the political sphere. In Rwanda, the existence of quotas for women in parliament and local government has encouraged women more broadly to participate more actively in community life, work outside the home, speak in public meetings, and demand greater equality in their intimate relationships (Burnet 2011).

## NEW FRONTIERS IN QUOTA RESEARCH

Quotas are increasingly employed around the world as a measure to overcome inequalities in political representation. While the literature on gender quotas is extensive (and still growing), little work currently examines the effects of quotas for other groups in a systematic fashion (for an exception, see Crisp et al. 2018, on Maori seats in New Zealand). An emerging body of studies, however, has begun to explore questions of intersectionality in relation to quotas – asking, for example, how quotas for women and ethnic minorities affect the representation of ethnic minority women (Hughes 2011) and how those for women and youth shape the electoral prospects of young women (Belschner 2020). This work offers reasons for both optimism and pessimism with regard to the impact of quotas on wider patterns of inequality.

In cases where gender and youth quotas are introduced simultaneously, for example, progress for young women can be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand, the double counting of young women under both sets of quota requirements can serve to promote young female candidates, counteracting the double discrimination they face. On the other hand, such policies are susceptible to abuse by elites (mainly older men), who can thus limit the number of seats they might otherwise have to give up to newcomers. After the 2014 elections in Tunisia, for example, women under 45 occupied more than 80 per cent of the seats held by that age group. The share of older men stayed roughly the same while those of younger men and older women went down (Belschner 2020). In addition to mapping the representational effects of quotas for a variety of groups, therefore, future research should also attend to their intersectional impact – highlighting how quotas contribute (or not) to greater diversity in political representation overall.

## NOTES

1. For details on policies mentioned in this chapter (as well as information on quotas in place in other countries), see the Gender Quotas Database at <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas>.
2. In Singapore, at least one minority ethnic candidate must be fielded in multi-member constituencies based on the party list plurality bloc vote system – an approach similar to a legislative quota (Tan 2014).
3. For more details, see <https://zeroproject.org/policy/uganda-2/>.

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