

The results of the impact assessment are written down in the statement of reasons or the justification for the bill submitted to Parliament.

B. Role of Legislative Committees

Legislative committees are the "workshops" of parliaments tasked with scrutinizing bills and they decide whether or not to recommend them for approval by the larger body. The committees conduct public hearings and invite expert testimonies as well as rely on research findings of think tanks and academic institutions for research-based information. Several countries have legislative committees specifically mandated to review legislation from a gender perspective:

1. South Africa's Joint Monitoring Committee on the Improvement of Quality of Life and Status of Women (JMCIQLSW)

The JMCIQLSW started as an ad hoc committee and evolved into a permanent committee in 1998, to exercise gender oversight of legislation. The JMCIQLSW has also been involved in monitoring legislation that is not traditionally regarded as falling within the ambit of "gender issues" but nevertheless has significant impact on the quality of lives of women, such as the Firearms Control Bill 2000, the Banks Amendment Bill 2000 and the Convergence Bill of 2005.⁶

The JMCIQLSW, together with the Community Agency for Social Enquiry (CASE) and the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA), started the Women's Budget Initiative (WBI). The JMCIQLSW has consistently engaged with the Department of Finance about the need to "engender" the country's macro-economic policy and national budget. It has taken a particular interest in how the country's budget is allocated, especially in terms of spending on issues such as poverty, gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS.

2. Costa Rica's Committee on Women

The Committee on Women was established in 1999 in the Legislative Assembly of Costa Rica and is responsible for formulating and assessing bills that relate to women. The Committee is empowered to exercise oversight of the executive action on women's issues. The Costa Rican legislature is very small and is composed of 57 members, 22 of whom are women (38%). The Committee on Women has five members, one of whom is a man. The mandate of the Committee on Women is to review and make legislative proposals on women's issues, to study problems in connection with the quality of women's lives and their human rights, to make the improvements required to current legislation, and to monitor relevant legal developments. The Committee also has a mandate to propose the changes needed to bring national legislation on women's issues in line with provisions in international treaties. The Committee has the authority to conduct written consultations with and hear testimonies from individuals in the executive branch who are legally required to appear before it. The Committee prepares an agenda for each legislative session, which must be continuously

5. Finland, 'Impact Assessment', p. 38.

6. Mahlangu-Nkabinde, G., 'Legislative and Policy Outputs: Achievements of the South African Joint Monitoring Committee on the Improvement of the Quality of Life and Status of Women' in 'The Role of Parliamentary Committees in Mainstreaming Gender and Promoting the Status of Women'; Seminar for Members of Parliamentary Bodies Dealing with Gender Equality, Dec. 4-6, 2006, IPU Publication, 2007.