



Assessing Women's Political Party Programs:

# Best Practices and Recommendations

2008



NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS



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# NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE

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The National Democratic Institute is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization working to support and strengthen democratic institutions worldwide. Since its founding in 1983, NDI and its local partners have worked to establish and advance democratic institutions and practices by building political and civic organizations, safeguarding elections, and promoting citizen participation, openness and accountability in government.

With staff members and volunteer political practitioners from more than 100 nations, NDI brings together individuals and groups to share ideas, knowledge, experiences and expertise. Partners receive broad exposure to best practices in international democratic development that can be adapted to the needs of their own countries. NDI's multinational approach reinforces the message that while there is no single democratic model, certain core principles are shared by all democracies. Deepening democracy so it can deliver tangible improvements to people's lives is an overarching NDI objective.

**Citizen Participation** – Making democracy work requires informed and active citizens who voice their interests, act collectively and hold public officials accountable. NDI helps citizens engage vigorously in the political process and serve as a link between citizens and elected officials.

**Elections** – NDI engages with political parties and civic organizations in voter and civic education, electoral law reform and monitoring all phases of the election process. The Institute has worked with more than 300 citizen groups and coalitions in 74 countries, engaged with hundreds of parties promoting electoral integrity and organized over 100 international election observation delegations. NDI has also played a leading role in establishing standards for international election observation.

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# I. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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The publication of *Assessing Women's Political Party Programs: Best Practices and Recommendations* by the National Democratic Institute (NDI or the Institute) is a culmination of nearly 25 years of work by NDI staff and volunteers helping to integrate and advance women within political parties and promote women's political participation more broadly; the Institute is grateful for their efforts. Throughout these programs, there have been successes, as well as challenges. Assessing the Institute's impact on women in political parties required a great collective effort by NDI staff.

Susana McCollom, Alyson Kozma, Kristin Haffert and Sara Zellner conducted the field interviews and wrote the report.

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Appreciation is extended to all who shared their time and thoughts with NDI during the interviews. Their commitment to women's equality and political participation and their dedication to strengthening democracy are inspiring. They serve as role models for women worldwide.

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## II. INTRODUCTION

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Despite comprising more than 50 percent of the world's population, women remain underrepresented as voters, political leaders and elected officials in every region of the world. Their participation is essential to strengthening the inclusive and representative character of democratic institutions. Studies have found that countries with higher rates of female participation in government are associated with lower levels of corruption.<sup>1</sup> In addition, as demonstrated by the most recent United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Index (HDI), countries with the highest levels of gender empowerment have been able to provide their citizens with the highest standards of living.<sup>2</sup>

NDI currently works in more than 60 countries, creating programs that are specifically tailored to women and ensuring that women are a part of every existing program. At any given time, nearly 75 percent of NDI country programs have a dedicated component addressing women's political participation. The Institute helps women acquire the tools necessary to participate successfully in all aspects of the political process – in legislatures, political parties and civil society as leaders, activists and informed citizens.

These programs create an environment where women can advocate on matters of policy, run for political office, be elected, govern effectively, and participate meaningfully in every facet of civic and political life. NDI has also introduced several global initiatives that aim to connect politically active women and help them network across time and place, such as the International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics (iKNOW Politics) and the Win with Women Global Initiative. iKNOW Politics is an online workspace designed to serve the needs of elected officials, candidates, political party leaders and members, researchers, students and other practitioners interested in advancing women in politics. It is a joint project of NDI, UNDP, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA). The Win with Women Global Initiative focused exclusively on strengthening women's role in political parties. The Initiative launched an effort by NDI to place a particular emphasis on political party programs, where women's participation and leadership are very low. Access to and advancement within political parties – the gateway to political leadership – remains both essential to women's political success and the most difficult political door for women to enter.

One of the major challenges in all women's participation programs is raising the awareness of male party leaders about the need to increase women's political participation and leadership as both the right and the politically advantageous thing to do. Continuing challenges include women's lack of influence in party policy and platform development, absence or limited representation on executive bodies in parties, lack of leadership positions, and marginalization of women's wings within parties.

NDI is currently conducting women's political participation programs in more than 40 countries. While NDI works on a range of women's political participation initiatives, political party programs comprise the majority of these programs. NDI programs focus on building skills and capacity, as well as reinforcing among party leaders the value of outreach to women as voters, party leaders and candidates.

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<sup>1</sup> David Dollar et al., "Are Women Really the 'Fairer' Sex? Corruption and Women in Government," Policy Research Report on Gender and Development Working Paper Series No. 4, October 1999. Available at: <<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTGENDER/Resources/wp4.pdf>> (July 2008).

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Development Program (UNDP). Human Development Report 2007/2008: Fighting Climate Change: Human Solidarity in a Divided World, 2008. Available at: <<http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr2007-2008/>>.

NDI embarked on this assessment in an effort to better understand effective approaches to women’s political party programs across a number of regions and to measure the impact of such programs. The assessment is designed to identify the specific elements and approaches which were most effective in encouraging women’s participation and leadership in political parties. Although drawn from NDI programs, the information gathered in this assessment is intended to be used by both individuals and organizations as a road map to help facilitate women’s political leadership worldwide.

Interviews with women<sup>3</sup> in four countries – Morocco, Indonesia, Serbia and Nepal – provide the basis for narratives that capture the character of their particular country, and, at the same time, reveal how women across regions share both challenges to political leadership and strategies to overcoming those barriers. The women’s stories intersect in the following areas:

1. Women in these countries are more politically engaged today than they have been in the past, however, there has not been a corollary increase in the number of women political leaders;
2. Perception of women as political leaders can only come with women’s true integration within political parties;
3. Internal party reform is critical to women’s advancement; however, obstacles such as lack of transparency, internal democracy, merit-based advancement and decentralization limit women’s rise within political parties;
4. Increased communication and cooperation among women across party lines has been viewed as a notable success; and
5. Democratic advancement has coincided with and contributed to a much-needed cultural shift in attitudes regarding gender.

Overall, these narratives conclude that participants across countries feel empowered by women’s political party programs. The most common response to NDI surveys regarding women’s political party programs has been: “give us more.”

This handbook is divided into three sections: 1) Best Practices; 2) Recommendations; and 3) Country Narratives. The Best Practices section compiles the perspectives of women who have participated in women’s political party programs in their respective countries. These women cite successful and beneficial approaches and strategies.

The Recommendations section identifies the program areas that respondents viewed as areas to be strengthened and further developed in order to make women’s political party programs more effective.

Together, the Best Practices and Recommendations sections provide a blueprint for most effective women’s political party programs.

The final section provides commentaries by the women of Morocco, Indonesia, Serbia, and Nepal, who participated in the three-month field review and analysis involved in the study. This study did not seek to examine specific strategies or approaches to women’s political party or political participation programs as identified exclusively by NDI staff. Instead, it sought to gauge the programs’ effectiveness on those they directly influenced through the perspectives of the women’s political party program participants, beneficiaries and other key stakeholders, and included some input from resident staff. Through this process, the study aimed to identify which program elements are most critical for success.

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<sup>3</sup> Individuals interviewed are referred to as “respondents,” and most are women. See “Methodology” section for more details.



One unexpected result of the study was the discovery that women’s political party programs have had a stronger impact on women’s participation in political processes in general, rather than on their advancement within political parties in particular. Respondents spoke at length of grassroots programs, rural outreach, civil society partnerships and other meaningful subjects, as well as a sense that women’s equality – and particularly women’s political participation – was finally part of the public discourse largely as a result of these programs.



## III. METHODOLOGY

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The Women’s Political Party Programming Assessment employed a qualitative methodological approach and aimed to:

1. Capture personal, detailed stories, experiences and perceptions among respondents to help illuminate the processes and nuances attached to program development; and
2. Establish a sense of comfort, confidentiality and openness among respondents who are largely in mid- to high-level political or other professional roles.

### Qualitative Research Approach

A qualitative research approach was employed to analyze and report on the findings and narratives. To maximize research quality and clarity, as well as to avoid bias, researchers reviewed and identified key findings and emergent themes following the completion of interviews in each research site and only consistently referenced findings were included.

Country narratives reveal both large-scale, meta-narratives as well as more detailed experiences and perceptions that may not always reflect historical or political fact; in some cases, specific notations of this have been included as a reminder to the reader. Similarly, the Best Practices and Recommendations speak to consistently shared experiences and beliefs of the respondents. They reflect a convergence of approaches that women and men across disparate political, economic and social backdrops highlighted to be the most useful, as well as the most personally significant.

Researchers extracted quotes that best addressed a theme, story or consistent finding to help provide context for each point. Given the qualitative research approach, the focus of this study was not statistical program outcomes or measurement, but rather an impact assessment based on perception of experience by those most directly affected by the programs. Part of the rich nature of qualitative research lies in its fluidity – i.e., in the course of setting out to measure one thing, one finds another. This valuable, unexpected information is a finding unto itself. In this project, while we set out primarily to assess programmatic impact on women in political parties, we found that participants wanted to talk about the broader social and political impact of these programs – an important programmatic outcome, but one not necessarily anticipated.

### Country Selection

Morocco, Indonesia, Serbia and Nepal were selected for the research project. The criteria for country selection were:

1. Regional representation of NDI’s geographic presence around the world;
2. Length of time NDI has been operating in the country; and
3. The continuity of women’s political party programs in that country.

Longstanding, continuously operating programs were chosen to provide the most comprehensive perspective of program impact and experience. The initial countries selected were Morocco, Indonesia, Serbia and Kenya.

Due to the political volatility following the December 2007 election, a scheduled visit to Kenya during the timeframe of this project was not possible, and Nepal was substituted.

## Research Timeframe

Eighty-three interviews were conducted in the four selected countries between December 2007 and March 2008.

## Selection and Recruiting

Using local and international criteria, the project sought to ensure that the most informed and diverse representation of respondents was interviewed.

Three categories of individuals – referred to as “respondents” throughout the report – were selected and interviewed:

1. *NDI Staff* – NDI staff members, both women and men, the majority of whom had specifically worked on or managed women’s political party programs.
2. *NDI Program Participants* – Women with past and/or present involvement in women’s political party programs. Most participants had significant educational background. Most had held high- or mid-level positions within a political party and/or were parliamentarians.
3. *Externals* – Women and men actively involved in each country’s social, political, and community affairs who had not been directly involved with NDI programs. Respondents in this category include party leaders, journalists, nongovernmental organizations (NGO) leaders and academics. They may or may not have been familiar with NDI.

The breakdown of respondents by category is as follows. Eleven of the interviews included men in both staff and external categories.

	Staff	Participants	Externals
Morocco	4	13	4
Indonesia	4	10	8
Serbia	4	17	1
Nepal	5	7	6
<b>Totals</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>19</b>

Interviews were conducted across a range of parties in each country, consistent with NDI’s multi-party programmatic approach.

Respondents were assured of interview confidentiality. In order to guarantee anonymity, the study does not identify the individual respondent by name, political party or position in an NDI program. Incentives were not offered. Instead, respondents volunteered their time and input to the project. Respondents expressed a general enthusiasm and gratitude to be engaged in the research process.

Most program participant and staff interviews were conducted in person at the subject country’s NDI office. There were a few interviews at respondent workplaces, at parliament, and at local cafés.

In order to meet the travel and other scheduling needs of some respondents, three interviews were conducted with staff by telephone and Skype following site visits.

## **Interview Questions, Length and Narratives**

The assessment instrument (referred to as “Interview Guidelines” – see Appendices I, II, & III) was designed to learn about NDI’s women’s political party programming experience. The research goal entailed learning:

1. What approaches have worked well;
2. What approaches have not worked or worked less well; and
3. What strategies could be adopted by or enhance women’s political party programs in other countries.

The interview guidelines are comprised of a set of questions (see Appendices) developed for each of the three respondent populations. Each contained the same core questions, and some variations were made in order to accommodate the respondents not closely or directly involved with NDI’s work.

Notes were both handwritten and computer-based. Quotes are largely verbatim, with some editing for clarity. Interview length ranged from 30 minutes to one hour and 45 minutes, based on respondent availability and time allotment. The qualitative research approach adopted for this study emphasized narration, personal experience, and perceptions, and not a quantitatively-oriented, systematic reporting structure.

## **Research Staff**

In each site, the Director or Program Manager of NDI’s Women’s Political Participation team and one consultant from Washington, DC conducted the interviews. The majority (about two-thirds) of interviews were done with the use of an interpreter, generally a local NDI staff member.

## IV. BEST PRACTICES

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The majority of the commentaries in this section focused on women in political parties, the original goal of the study. Respondents were asked not only to share their perceptions of the most effective efforts to help women engage in and achieve leadership within political parties, but also to identify those efforts that were less useful. Most significantly, respondents emphasized that the most effective programs are those which incorporate comprehensive programming approaches within the context of women's political participation and political party programs that help tackle women's unequal status. Respondents indicated that progress both coincides with and contributes to a much needed cultural shift in attitudes regarding gender. Three programmatic areas emerged as essential to women's political progress and can be broadly useful for organizations and individuals who are engaged in efforts to improve women's political participation, particularly through political parties:

- A program's capacity to reach across partisan, socio-economic, ethnic, gender, and age boundaries;
- A program's provision of: 1) highly effective core skills training, 2) dissemination of critical materials, and 3) confidence-building for women interested in politics; and
- A program's ability to provide support and opportunities that enhance women's capacity to work together, giving them an advantage over men whose political engagement is often characterized by partisan rancor.

Among a wide range of findings, one emerged that conveys some optimism: patriarchal tendencies in politics do not dissuade women leaders. Women are seen to embody democratic strengths and, as such, their full participation and leadership in political processes will only serve to strengthen democratic institutions and better ensure that democracy delivers on its promises to citizens.

Highlighted below are a number of best practice guidelines based on interview responses. These guidelines are most valuable to the political success of women broadly and within parties, followed by recommendations for further activity to help them progress, as experienced illustratively in Morocco, Indonesia, Serbia and Nepal. Sections are ordered by prevalence, beginning with the most commonly emphasized areas.

### 1. **Best Practice: Consistent Communications Trainings**

Communication skills trainings are highly appreciated among respondents, particularly as they relate to public speaking and conflict resolution. Consistent training and ongoing practice in public speaking can help women gain the confidence they need to participate more in political party and other meetings, where they report often having to fight to be heard. Communications trainings include helping women to speak publicly, as well as to talk persuasively within their own families, and specifically with their husbands. As one Moroccan participant said: "*If [she] can convince [her husband], she can convince anyone in society.*" Some participants even reported that men inquire about accessing similar skills-building opportunities when they are only being provided to women.

Trainings that instruct women how to speak publicly, work with the media, and communicate interpersonally, are among the most empowering and inspiring for participants. For women who have long been silenced, the ability to engage in effective public speaking is a prerequisite for their success. In many societies, people are not used to listening to women; women must therefore be equipped with the knowledge and confidence to make themselves heard. This is not limited to media venues, but includes parliament and other political venues as key places for women to be heard and for women to gain political ground through effective communication. Based on respondent's comments, women's opportunity to become independent, persuasive communicators is often the greatest

predictor of her self-confidence level and, eventually, her degree of political engagement. Some Indonesian participants capture the sentiment of women in all four countries with great clarity:

*“Sometimes when gender issues come up, there is no woman in the room because they have other meetings. We need for women to do more than to speak loudly*

*to ask the minister something; we need to be there to influence the discussion. Both male members of the faction don’t want to discuss gender and the tradition is that only women must talk about women’s issues. Men say to women, ‘look, women are quiet.’ If you don’t want to struggle for your rights, we are not going to struggle for you.”*

*“Leaders need to articulate their positions as [well] as possible. Speaking in public is one of the most important things for leaders because it humiliates people when they don’t perform well in public. Think as a leader. [Learn] how to use public speaking to motivate people and to mobilize people. I see so many leaders speaking that are saying nothing.”*

*“Public speaking [is important]. Women keep silent, and men let them. Our culture makes women silent and most men like them like that. It is very useful to speak in party meetings and use convincing words, talk to the media, and talk in campaigns.”*

To enhance these efforts, respondents outline several key ingredients for successful communications trainings:

- Include both women and men helps build confidence and foster a sense of equality;
- Confidence-building efforts, through trainings and programs, provide a cumulative learning effect;
- Training should begin on a small-scale and be specific to client needs, and scale-up with a series of programs and events;
- Provide support for men and women to interact where they might not otherwise do so;
- Allow enough practice time;
- Foster more ways to work with media;
- Divide participants by party when there is potential for divulging sensitive strategies; and
- Decentralize training to include more provincial and rural areas.

Respondents are also interested in building message development skills, as many feel woefully under-prepared in this area. Women want assistance in developing messages around their particular strengths as *women* leaders and how to use these perceived positive qualities (more transparent, less corrupt, better listeners, etc.) to make themselves more politically appealing to voters, constituents, and other political actors. A Moroccan participant says: *“Teach women how to sell themselves. Often women have these skills but don’t know how to sell themselves.”*

By creating a platform for honing women’s verbal and political expression, communications trainings help facilitate confidence-building and thereby build a strong foundation for strong leadership and deeper political engagement.

**“For women who have long been silenced, the ability to engage in effective public speaking is a prerequisite for their success. People are not used to listening to women; women must therefore be equipped with the knowledge and confidence to make themselves heard.”**

## 2. *Best Practice: Focus on Building Leadership Skills*

Respondents are eager to see an enhanced focus on women's leadership potential and opportunities, starting with training. A Nepalese external respondent says: *"We still have problems finding qualified women; we need to do more leadership training."*

"Leadership skills" may mean different things to different people in different contexts. Women's leadership development seeks to build women's skills and self-confidence to empower them to take on leadership roles in their families, communities and public life. Leadership trainings are therefore aimed at developing effective leaders and encompass key areas of successful

leadership, including: communication, mobilization, coalition building, strategic planning, advocacy, and fundraising. Additionally, these workshops focus on the following: 1) building awareness of the already existing and valuable leadership roles participants hold in their families and communities; 2) women's unique perspectives and attributes as leaders; multiple leadership styles and identifying participants' personal

leadership styles; and 3) opportunities and challenges for women leaders. For most respondents, the most highly effective leadership training includes developing skills around public speaking, advocacy, and campaigning.

**"One of the most frequently referenced benefits of leadership training programs is the vast increase in self-confidence that participants feel upon completion of the training or program and the sense of empowerment that this conveys."**

Leadership building efforts and skills-based trainings have a clear and direct impact on women's competencies and skill-sets; however, it is important not to underestimate the confidence-building element that is inherent in these competencies. One of the most frequently referenced benefits of leadership training programs is the vast increase in self-confidence that participants feel upon completion of the training or program and the sense of empowerment that this conveys. One program participant in Nepal says:

*"I benefited by training...and from that day forward I improved my self-confidence and my strength. That's why I provided training to others. The training was an achievement and that's why I am [where I am] today. Women hesitate in public speaking, but the training helped me with this."*

The sharp increase in self-confidence that arises as a result of training is consistently noted as the single greatest impact. An Indonesian participant notes that:

*"Women need personal capability development; it's the most important thing. Women may be smart, but lack enough self-confidence to [insist] that they should have the same opportunities as men. [This lack of self-confidence is caused by the culture and the religion and customs and values.]"*

A program participant in Nepal echoes this thought:

*"Because of the NDI training, women put pressure on parties at the central level and before they never had courage to speak. Now they're confident so they can voice their issues in their party."*

A Serbian participant describes how she has witnessed the integration of women with leadership potential through local efforts to increase gender equality:

*“Through gender equality commissions and gender equality programs, smart women [are being identified]...NDI is helping women activists in nine regions (three in Belgrade) to gain skills to advocate for gender advocacy issues in general. [NDI has] identified promising leaders through this program... We give them the ability to be effective public speakers and get support.”*

Still, the need for broader leadership education extends beyond the acquisition of political tools, as a Nepalese participant elaborates:

*“In order to be a leader, not just education is sufficient. Women need an education of society, too, so they should be politically knowledgeable... They can then be compatible to the members of the party who talk about these things freely.”*

While success in increased leadership training and capacity development has been noted, effective monitoring of training programs is necessary for ongoing success. A Moroccan participant says: *“I want to know how programs, and my participation, affect my party; let’s truly assess the impact.”* Despite concerns regarding monitoring and impact assessment, respondents overwhelmingly highlight the positives, particularly the professional, personal and political growth witnessed among themselves.

### 3. **Best Practice: Uniting Women across Parties**

The natural tendency of political parties to be competitive with each other often impedes substantive political work. Stories of party leaders and activists who are unable or unwilling to sit in the same room together, much less work together, were repeated in all four countries. Respondents expressed a strong demand for efforts that help unite women across political parties.

Such multi-party work contributes to distinguishing women political actors, who have often demonstrated an increased capacity to interact with each other as peers, rather than view each other solely as competitors. This interaction contributes to the positive perception of women in politics by party leaders and citizens alike. A Serbian participant says:

***“...multi-party work contributes to distinguishing women political actors, who have often demonstrated an increased capacity to interact with each other as peers, rather than view each other solely as competitors.”***

*“Do[ing] more to connect women from different political parties...[getting] women together...will help democratic support, help make connections...I think there’s no other organization in Serbia that can do it, and we’ve failed to do it by ourselves.”*

Nepalese participants concur and emphasize the importance of working across party lines, as well as the success of programs that seek to foster such multi-party relationships:

*“Forget about your party, only then can you [as a woman] be heard. We need to have ties between women from all parties for a program to be successful. Even though they have different ideologies, they should be united. That would make a successful program, so they are one when problems arise. For example [women] have protested together. If they don’t raise their voice, they don’t have strong solidarity.”*

*“The formation of the [Interparty Women’s Alliance] is the greatest contribution...it is teaching them how to develop solidarity of women. This is a great thing. It brought them to one platform uniting their voice[s]. It [has] a great impact.”*

The success of women’s political party programs in bringing women together across party lines is significant, and many respondents noted the unique capacity of women to do such cross-party work. The multi-party



women’s caucuses in Morocco, Indonesia and Nepal were all highlighted as among the most successful program initiatives with significant impacts. Even in Serbia’s highly polarized society, a staff member remarks that: *“Women have learned to be strategic and learned the need for women’s solidarity [and forming] cross-party initiatives.”*

Respondents encourage efforts that focus on continued or additional partnerships with political parties, with other NGOs, and with donors. Partnerships with NGOs and close working relationships with donors, according to respondents, could help diminish the risk of duplication and are often the most effective avenue to affect grassroots change. Given the minimal attention that political parties often pay to issues of particular interest to women, it is imperative to encourage women to work on these issues across ideological lines. Respondents assert that it is highly important to incorporate approaches that unite women from different political parties. In political party climates that are, in all four countries, characterized as resistant to reform efforts, lack of transparency, and suffer from infighting – all of which impede women’s entry to and advancement in political parties – respondents found the capacity to partner and engage in dialogue both necessary and inspiring.

To help accomplish this, respondents encourage an organizational focus on relationship-building and networking as a way to promote women’s abilities amongst male party leaders. They suggest accomplishing such relationship-building through:

- Implementing training programs that allow men and women to interact as peers;
- Involving influential male party leaders in women’s programs, including study missions, which exposes men to women’s leadership and potential, thereby maximizing the effects of such an exchange; and
- Increasing the role of program staff to more actively inform party leaders about women with high leadership potential.

## 4. **Best Practice: Working With Parties on Internal Reform**

Resistance by political parties is considered a primary hurdle for women who hope to enter political life. Respondents across the board point to male dominance within political parties as a substantial hurdle. Patriarchal attitudes restrict women’s access to political party structures and prevent real change, particularly as it relates to women’s political leadership.

Furthermore, political party elitism and male dominance not only make women’s entry into politics difficult, they also contribute to a divide in knowledge and information between leaders and constituents. Many respondents note that despite the move toward democracy, parties and party members are minimally accessible to the public both through outreach and response. Women politicians, however, generally have a better overall reputation for outreach.

Continued resistance to women’s leadership within political parties creates a sense of urgency among respondents, who stress the importance of spending more time working with political parties on women’s leadership and internal reform initiatives instead of spending time solely with individual women or groups of women leaders.

Not being truly engaged with or taken seriously by political parties makes many respondents, particularly participants who are actively engaged in politics, feel like *“pawns”* or *“dolls.”* Some participants say:

*“Women are active in parties, but currently no parties are convinced of the gender issues – they just use women as pawns and objects. This is because of machismo and because women are now seen as competition for men.”*  
(Moroccan Participant)

*“[There are] no women leaders in parties. The ones that are there are often rubber stamps.”* (Nepalese External)

*“Women [in political parties] are only used as objects, especially with the quota. They are not in decision-making positions.” (Indonesian External)*

*“No matter how hard we work with women, we’ll never see the changes we want without changes to the party...” (Moroccan Participant)*

As part of this effort, respondents call for more transparency within political parties – a trait often associated with women but not with the male hierarchy – that still largely exists. For respondents, transparency signifies progress, while a lack of transparency is associated with old political party mentalities that both severely limit the participation of women and the average citizen, as well as lack accountability. Some participants say:

*“We need laws and rules for implementation that are precise and transparent. This includes quotas, as earlier discussed, as well as other mechanisms to make women viable candidates and more active in political life.” (Moroccan Participant)*

*“I’d give political parties an ‘F’... In the United States and Europe people are entitled to see the decision-making process, to be informed about why parties are adopting some kinds of decisions; that means connections with accountability and being responsible, about decisions. [Here in Serbia political parties are] not transparent, especially within the party.” (Serbian Participant)*

Respondents further highlight the need for support in enforcing existing quotas so that they are firm and meaningful. However, participants feel that quotas alone are not sufficient to ensure the necessary increases in women’s political participation. Additional measures would include consistency in monitoring party nominating procedures and lists to avoid the sudden removal of women initially included. Respondents indicated that quotas must be bolstered by real substance if women are going to progress politically:

*“[Women will advance] first through a quota law in political party laws, and second, through networking. Make sure that not only is the quota in law, but that implementation is actually happening inside the political parties. For instance, with women candidates, our big issue is the candidate list for election. We need people to monitor it, because there may be women listed second one day and listed fifth the next. We have to monitor the list.” (Indonesian External)*

**“No matter how hard we work with women, we’ll never see the changes we want without changes to the party...”**

*“Once elected, the biggest problem is that those women still don’t have a voice of influence and represent mere numbers or quotas.” (Serbian Staff)*

Respondents hope efforts can help influence both attitudinal and administrative changes within the parties. Some respondents say party commitment to women’s participation at the strategic level can be deepened through assistance or guidance. Several participants highlight this:

*“Work more with parties. Put involvement of women in their statutes, manifestos, and policies in local and national level. Otherwise, [progress] is not possible. They need a clear cut written plan for women.” (Nepalese Participant)*

## 5. **Best Practice: Training Women to Train Other Women**

Real political advancement requires both political education and self-confidence, and many respondents say women still need to bolster themselves in both of these areas. Working with politically experienced women, particularly those who have already undergone some political training, is critical to training new generations of

women political leaders and to helping women mentor and train each other. For many respondents, employing a training of trainers methodology has proven to be an effective and sustainable way to increase women's political knowledge, skills and capacity. Furthermore, this method is empowering and inspiring to both women trainers and trainees. A Serbian participant says:

*“Engage those already active, to work more on the campaign to advocate for other women to engage. Get enough support to do this. I noticed in these elections a couple of campaigns of women advocating for one another; asking women voters to vote.”*

Training could be tailored for different groups, including women within political parties, members of civil society organizations, and citizens who are interested but not yet involved in politics. Given that training sessions also bring mentoring opportunities for women, strong local women trainers can also serve as much-needed role models.

Creating and strengthening a cadre of women master trainers boosts the trainers' self-confidence and sense of investment in efforts to increase women's political participation and build a network of trained women leaders. Trainees, in turn, are inspired by seeing women from their own parties and communities possessing and actively sharing advanced skills and knowledge. An Indonesian participant says:

*“After a [training of trainers] in Jakarta with 40 participants from Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines and other countries, I learned about campaigning and fundraising and...[I] developed and conducted trainings in the regions which has had a snowballing effect. I trained women in three provinces...Women I trained have trained others...”*

*“Because of the training [of trainers], I got many materials to use in the province for male and female candidates... especially for new women members. I created the agenda for all of the trainings for which I used the NDI materials; the training gave me much more knowledge and material to pass on.”*

Enabling women to train each other increases their skill and confidence levels, builds a network of better qualified women, and encourages mentoring relationships. Serbian participants who have trained other women say:

*“The experience I gained could apply to future work with women and youth in my party as a trainer – I was able to teach someone else, pass along skills.”*

*“As a trainer I met thousands of people, exchanged experiences [and] succeeded in influencing political lives as NDI did for me. I like politics because I like to work with citizens, for bettering their lives.”*

## **6. Best Practice: Developing Capacity and Preparedness of Elected Women**

Having attained political office, women need the skills, knowledge and self-confidence to perform. Women often find themselves in positions for which they have little preparation.

*“There are women who are elected because of quota, but may not know anything about the [substance].”*  
(Nepalese Participant)

*“The 30 percent quota won't be effective if we don't prepare our women to run for office. What's the difference between incapable men and incapable women? We need men and women who have competencies and qualities to sit in parliament.”* (Indonesian Participant)

*“Women don't recognize their own power.”* (Serbian Participant)

As more women are elected and appointed to political leadership positions, respondents highlight the importance of capacity development. Women across all four countries discuss personal and professional growth derived from political trainings including campaigning, conflict resolution and communications which they deemed necessary to effectively compete with their male counterparts.

As part of this capacity development, respondents describe the need for extended training as more women are newly elected, particularly as these women often have had little or no opportunity to develop the type of specialized skills necessary to succeed in public office positions. Such skills may be office-specific, such as rules of procedures, drafting and passing legislation and budgets, or more generalized, such as public speaking and staff management. This is linked to the overall expressed need for basic skills development and technical assistance for women activists and non-elected leaders, and more frequent trainings, particularly at the grassroots level and with an increased focus on advocacy training. Such a focus will provide more opportunities to greater numbers of women, including those in rural areas, to help increase the number of trained women leaders in the pipeline.

Truly developing women's capacity requires teaching them substantive skills to help them prepare to take on decision-making roles and in turn, to help bring other women into leadership positions. Respondents urge NDI to reach all women – those already in political leadership positions, those newly elected, and those considering running for elected office – as they contribute to paving paths for women to enter and advance within politics.

## 7. *Best Practice: Exchanging Information Internationally*

Sharing experiences and knowledge is tremendously important to respondents, who often emphasize trainings by international organizations as highly valuable for their political learning. Respondents stated that the solidarity and sense of empowerment gained through learning from and interacting with female colleagues around the world is both personally inspiring and professionally useful. The value of this shared experience allows women political leaders to learn from the challenges, successes and models of their counterparts, as well as helps to build an international network of women leaders.

Women believe strongly in the benefits that come with visible examples of other women's political participation strategies and experiences. An Indonesian participant speaks to the benefit of information sharing:

*“It was very good to be a participant who traveled from Indonesia to Malaysia for [a training program] in order to be able to exchange with women from Malaysia, Philippines and other parts of Indonesia. We hope for more advanced training...The trainings help [us] understand that [we] have skills and convey how they can be utilized.”*

**“The solidarity and sense of empowerment gained through learning from and interacting with female colleagues around the world is both personally inspiring and professionally useful.”**

Some respondents are particularly eager to learn how women have handled similar issues of political barriers and advancement in other countries. A Nepalese participant says:

*“If there are some good things happening in politics elsewhere, [we] need to learn information from other countries, sharing experiences and information. I went to Bangladesh...and met people from different countries and they shared their experiences. I think it's a fruitful experience and learned many things, having these types of exchanges programs.”*

This sentiment is echoed by an Indonesian program participant who says:

*“It would be good for women from other Muslim countries to come here and see the women MPs [Members of Parliament] so that they can see our network and our models in parliament – to inspire them, [like] when I [attended] a workshop with women from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan.”*

Towards this end, it could be useful to consider establishing more training and educational programs for both women and men that include international exchange opportunities. A Moroccan participant notes that “*cross cultural exchanges, especially regarding campaigns and shadowing [a campaign]*” would be particularly useful. Program participants emphasize the importance of men’s participation in such exchanges and the value that these programs may have in helping change men’s perceptions about women’s political leadership.

## **8. Best Practice: Engaging Youth to Help Change Socio-Political Attitudes and Behavior**

While respondents are willing to accept that resistance to women’s political leadership among longstanding political leaders will take time to change, younger leaders represent a generation that may be more democratically inclined, and in turn, more likely to favor women’s political and social equality. Young leaders therefore represent an opportunity to change established political norms. A Nepalese external respondent says: “*[The] younger generation of men realizes that if women don’t enter politics, no change will happen. But this is only cerebral and not practical.*”

Youth programs serve as a highly effective avenue for increasing women’s political participation and leadership. Not only do they create an effective venue for young women to see themselves as capable political leaders, they also help sow the seeds of gender equality among future political leaders from the earliest stages of their political careers.

Youth programs, particularly around training and capacity development, are a critical resource for long-term democratic success. This is particularly noteworthy in Serbia, where trainings that target youth have served to empower women. A Serbian participant says:

*“Youth programs are really great, and... a lot of [those participants] have become something in political parties, on different levels – men and women. NDI always asks us to think about gender. Both men and women, they ask. I was first in contact with NDI in 2000, through a youth organization’s summer school invitation. It was the first time I was pushed to think about gender equality; [my team had] four men and four women. Now I have those values inside of me.”*

Despite some successful inclusion of youth in politics, respondents also stress an absence of fresh, young perspectives in the current political climate as a glaring problem. These younger people are precisely what many respondents feel are needed to bring about long-term socio-political shifts. Both staff and participants stress the lack of internal democracy and renewal among political parties, whose leaders are resistant to change and unwilling to relinquish power. A Moroccan participant says:

*“There are always political party problems, especially with the under-representation of youth leaders. Older leaders consider youth a threat and competition, not complementary. In turn, there are not enough opportunities for youth around decision-making. The new secretary general, elected in May, is good, younger, and making change. But fast changes are not happening, largely because of these age problems. We need to have youth leaders there to take over when older leaders leave.”*

Respondents also describe contemporary youth as increasingly politically disillusioned. Targeting and inspiring this group could help infuse a new energy into the political landscape that will further drive women into leadership and positions.

As part of its efforts to reach different population segments, mobilizing younger populations emerges as a critical resource for the long-term integration of democracy and for the advancement of women. In addition, many participants encourage actively recruiting younger women and men into the training programs.

Different strategies are proposed for reaching participants based on age, skill level and location. For example, some respondents feel the integration of a gender perspective into youth programs was highly effective for them as they were first entering the political world while for others, women's empowerment may have been better achieved in a more deliberate venues like women's training programs.

## V. RECOMMENDATIONS

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The qualitative study suggests that while women’s political party programs have impacted women within political parties, this impact has proliferated beyond the party context. Women’s political party programs have also contributed to increased women’s participation in politics and public life, as well as broader conversations about gender equality. In country after country, the interviews led to questions and ideas involving all aspects of the political process, gender equality and possibilities for women. The empowerment of marginalized women and their emerging political ambitions may be the most important results of these programs.

This section reflects some of the differences between what the assessment set out to measure and what it revealed. It focuses on recommendations, or areas that respondents highlight as ones to strengthen in order to further bolster women’s political party programs. These recommendations may reflect strategies that are already being utilized to some extent, but have been highlighted by respondents as approaches they believe require resources and energy. Sections are ordered by prevalence, beginning with the most commonly emphasized areas.

### 1. **Recommendation: Integrate Men into Efforts to Promote Women’s Political Progress**

While respondents greatly value women-only training opportunities, they would also like to see more women’s political training opportunities that involve men, as a way to increase gender sensitivity and support for women’s political leadership. Respondents assert that training needs to penetrate attitudes that on the surface may seem open-minded, but in practice are obstructive. A Nepalese participant says:

*“We need to dialogue between men and women to build women’s confidence, sensitize men, and make change. Men are very diplomatic and not resistant to talking about women’s political programs, but they do nothing about it.”*

Respondents suggest more outreach to men as a means of changing these attitudes. Several respondents who point to past successes of mixed gender programs believe that the more men work with women, the more they begin to believe in women’s capabilities. A Serbia staff person talks about this:

*“As much as we need to educate women, we also need to educate men – we need both. If we just empower women and leave men on the sidelines, they won’t understand why they need women in politics. As colleagues, they don’t know what they’ll get. We must push them to understand that women need support and that men will have added value in women colleagues. Men need to understand that.”*

Respondents believe mixed gender training programs can serve as highly effective venues to demonstrate women’s capacity, and in turn, help to shift attitudes about gender. Such trainings can offer a safe, productive and politically neutral environment for both men and women to display their intellectual and interpersonal skills. This strategy is also in line with the idea that positive inter-group contact (i.e. between groups of different sexes, races, parties, etc.) produces long-term beneficial changes in behavior and perception among individuals in those groups. Some of the most effective trainings are those that have integrated men in dialogue, especially those that address confrontation and how to talk to men during disagreements.

Respondents stress the need for solid engagement on the part of program implementers with political parties, and particularly the men who hold leadership positions, in order to ensure that diverse groups of women are aware of training opportunities and resources. This follow-up could include program implementers alerting the

parties to details of upcoming training programs; tracking attendance at training sessions; recording details of skills-building trainings conducted; following up and informing parties of these activities in order to help raise the profile of women participants within the parties; and establishing specific contacts with influential women

within political parties, in addition to the male leaders, in order to open lines of communication with a variety of people.

**“...involve men, as a way to increase gender sensitivity and support for women’s political leadership... training needs to penetrate attitudes that on the surface may seem open-minded, but in practice are obstructive.”**

An increased emphasis on integrated (mixed gender) programs does not mean that women-only trainings are to be abandoned. While the need to increase men’s awareness of and responsiveness to issues of gender equality was repeatedly emphasized

to be of utmost urgency, the need for and value of women-only training spaces continues to be clear. Such spaces continue to be seen as empowering venues where “*women can be more natural and uninhibited*” (Indonesian participant), “*speak more freely*” and “*are more vocal and participatory*” (Nepalese participants). A Moroccan participant says:

*“When I first started, people said we need a specific women’s association, and I thought, why? We’re in a male and female society. Now that I’m involved I realize we do need a women’s association; men in-fight, and even more so with women. They use women just to say ‘look, we have women on board.’”*

More open engagement between program implementers and political parties might also help circumvent internal conflict, in which the whim of political party officials may determine whether or not they share information about certain opportunities with others and which women they share it with. An Indonesian external respondent says: “*If NDI tells us we need to have three women and three men on delegation going to the U.S. we’ll do it; even if women aren’t as qualified, NDI has that power to force us to be more equal.*”

Women’s political participation and political party programs benefit from the integration of women-only efforts (“standalone” programs) as well as those that integrate men and women (“mainstreamed” programs). Rather than strictly delineating mainstream and standalone programs or initiatives, various participants encourage the implementation of both approaches to reach women at all levels. One Moroccan participant says: “*Women political party and regular party programs have the same goal: to change behavior in politics and change the method of doing politics and to develop society.*”

The issue of gender integrated versus gender specific trainings was the subject of considerable discussion, particularly as it relates to training and educational efforts. It is important to note that discussion about these program approaches emerged more as a result of the survey questions rather than as an organic byproduct of discussions with participants.

Both approaches are considered highly constructive in developing women’s capacities and changing men’s views of women’s leadership abilities. Moreover, both are considered critical for long-term success.

## **2. Recommendation: Strengthen Partnerships Between Civil Society Organizations and Political Parties**

Outside of political parties, women are making greater strides. Civil society organizations (CSOs) are viewed as vehicles for women’s leadership and have emerged as places for women to cultivate their political, social and personal power. A Nepalese external respondent says:



*“[The number of women in leadership positions] is up a lot in CSOs, [but in] parties, it is not enough... There are very few women in parliament and parties who can assert themselves.”*

A Moroccan participant echoes this, saying “most [women leaders] are in CSOs”.

Respondents suggest that stronger party-CSO links may be important in advancing women’s issues and creating a common women’s agenda, as women tend to have stronger leadership roles in civil society organizations than they do in political parties. According to many respondents, CSO efforts to galvanize around women’s issues are exemplary.

For most respondents, accomplishing the kind of major cultural shifts that are demanded by full gender equality require the participation of all members of society and partnership among a variety of sectors, especially at the local level. Early and frequent coordination helps centralize efforts and avoid duplicating work with women. A Moroccan participant says:

*“Many international NGOs are concerned with women’s political participation. It is important for NGOs to communicate with each other and talk about what they are focusing on...[or they] can be counter-productive. If an NGO comes [to conduct a training] for the first time, women are eager and willing to participate but when the second institution comes with a similar program, women think they have already learned from a similar program and are often reluctant to attend another NGO’s program.”*

Second, partnerships between political parties,, local government entities and/or CSOs, who are critical in reaching and educating citizens, helps with organizational abilities to network, develop relationships, and sustain trust and communication at the grassroots level. In some cases, this means engaging religious leaders, as described by an Indonesian participant who says: *“Approach religious leaders. Engage them, because if there is any hesitation, it comes from them. People listen to them.”*

**“Civil society organizations are viewed as vehicles for women’s leadership and have emerged as places for women to cultivate their political, social and personal power.”**

### 3. Recommendation: Increase Rural and Grassroots Outreach

Respondents report that women at the grassroots level and in rural areas are not adequately engaged by international, and to some extent local, groups. This lack of regional presence and outreach to women in rural areas by program implementers is considered problematic. This is a considerable concern for respondents who say provincial areas pose a core challenge to women’s political progress. Enhancing these outreach efforts to focus on citizens who live outside urban areas, particularly through partnerships, would lead to increased women’s political participation and engagement outside of major cities where the need is great.

Rural inclusion is critical for change, and respondents highlight the importance of making special efforts to target rural areas, where women are harder to reach and where there may be fewer opportunities.

Respondents attribute the slow pace of democratization in rural areas to other key factors including:

- Poverty and economic hardship;
- Lack of education and high rates of illiteracy;
- Rising conservative influences; and
- Cultural and legal resistance to women rights and women’s political participation.

Obstacles such as illiteracy, poverty, and lack of civic education found throughout rural areas require attention. Political leaders, according to some participants, must work within this broader cultural context as they attempt to create systemic political change:

*“[There is still] a lot to do, women are still behind men. We need training, assistance, support, advocacy, capacities. Women’s rights are not full yet. Illiteracy and poverty [are still common] in rural areas. Rural women are not aware of what’s happening in Morocco, especially on the political scene.”* (Moroccan Participant)

*“If people are illiterate they cannot truly understand the voting process. And politicians can buy the vote of those who are poor.”* (Indonesian Participant)

Other women are also susceptible to the negative stereotypes that demean women’s political abilities. A Serbian participant says:

*“Women may not vote for other women, there is not enough solidarity... Like in rural areas, [attitudes are] very severe toward women who are interested in politics. My mother’s family is from south Serbia, where [men still get all inheritance], it’s very male-centric. Women bear a lot of housework; the home exclusively relies on women, which [also] means they have less time [for politics].”*

*“Women don’t support each other. It’s easier to work with men, as women are often seen as competition. They need to know there is room for everyone and a role for all.”*

Some respondents say rural women are less likely than their urban counterparts to support other women’s political involvement; rural women and those women with less education are less likely to vote for other women, and may even consider women’s political involvement inappropriate. Rural women’s tendency to support male leaders and candidates stems, in part, from the male dominated environment. A participant says:

*“There is still a huge [male] influence in the Serbian family; [for example], men decide who to vote for. Like when we go door to door campaigning and a woman answers the door, she says ‘Don’t ask me, come later when my husband is here.’ That is not uncommon in Serbia. In rural areas it’s especially common.”* (Serbian Participant)

In Indonesia, rural autonomy among thousands of provinces, all with individual agendas, makes these constituents the hardest to reach for political leaders. It is therefore important to help women build their own support systems.

Interestingly, rural areas may also pose great possibilities for change. The same factors that may present a challenge to changing rural

areas may actually serve the growth of women in office. Several respondents say fostering specific avenues to reach rural leaders may actually help spread social and cultural change throughout rural areas. For example, the implementation of a local provincial quota in Indonesia requiring 20 percent of women politicians would mean the integration of hundreds of thousands of women as the face of rural politics, simply because of the sheer size of the country. An Indonesian NDI staff person says:

*“The size of the country is daunting and the aid money for political development is ever-shrinking. With 32 provinces, there might be millions of women in one province. Party bylaws are really important because they affect internal decisions at every level of the party and given the size of the population, changing the bylaws could have a huge impact*

**“Obstacles such as illiteracy, poverty, and lack of civic education found throughout rural areas require attention. Political leaders, according to some participants, must work within this broader cultural context as they attempt to create systemic political change.”**

*on women...Because Indonesian political culture requires national parties to have their structures in at least half of the provinces and a quarter of the districts, in order to participate in elections, by changing bylaws you would require a significant number of women in their structures.”*

Respondents across the board believe targeting rural areas with support from international and local organizations is critical, especially in preparation for significant political events and elections. Targeting rural areas should happen both independently, through regional trainers’ programs, and in partnership with other NGOs. Respondents encourage increased commitment to grassroots outreach efforts and to making as many linkages as possible within these initiatives to national level work.

## 4. Recommendation: Engage Women Before and Between Elections

Respondents stress that it is not sufficient to engage women only around elections. It is critical to engage in ongoing, sustainable work with political parties to build women’s leadership before and between elections so that the stage is set for women’s full participation in all aspects of political decision-making. Respondents maintain that immediate engagement during and around elections are vital. Thus, they urge organizations to start training on campaigning, elections and lobbying and to begin addressing issues that could potentially inhibit women’s electoral participation, such as political party reform, as early as possible. Current efforts to engage women to the pre- and post-electoral period are insufficient.

**“Work with political parties to build women’s leadership before and between elections so that the stage is set for women’s full participation in all aspects of political decision-making.”**

Moroccan respondents, for example, feel that after experiencing the virtual exclusion of women from the 2007 national election, they need to start implementing a political process that engages women on a long-term basis. Serbian respondents state that while women are actively courted during election time, this is often a ploy to solicit votes rather than true inclusion of women into the fabric of the party.

*“Party offices...are only open on Election Day now or during the campaign period; parties are inactive until the campaign period, which leads to citizen apathy; there [is] no outreach to regions and to illiterates.” (Moroccan Participant)*

*“Parties are recruiting women for the general elections, just near the campaign period. Some women, informal leaders, are actually running for office this cycle, but they are perceived by the parties as pawns or as ‘vote getters’ for the party, rather than people who will add value or have any voice in the party. Many women are not aware of this hidden agenda and are proud to have been recruited.” (Indonesian Participant)*

*“Political parties remember women [only] when elections come; they have weak campaigning for women, and then remember they have women who should speak in front of the party. But strategically, women are not used, women are not so active.” (Serbian Participant)*

Similar to the Serbian respondent, the other three countries’ respondents push for early election and campaign work. For example, at the time of the interview, Indonesian respondents urged organizations to help prepare for the 2009 elections in the immediate future though it was more than a year in advance of elections. A participant said: “[We need to] lobby starting now to get women on lists and nominated in 2009 regardless of what happens with the electoral law.” Findings suggest that early and sustainable engagement is more likely to help shape long-term attitudinal changes around women’s political strengths and viabilities than the short-term, election-related strategies of political parties, which tend to focus on obtaining votes.

The long-term consequences of engaging women in the political process were exemplified during the time interviews were held in Nepal. At that time, the respondents were not only involved in election-related work but also the drafting of the new constitution. Most respondents viewed the involvement of women in the constitution drafting process as integral to the long-term outcome of this constitution which could help advance gender equality by including women's rights and concerns.

More broadly, respondents encourage work that helps cultivate attitudinal shifts within the political parties, including firm commitments to quotas, electing women leaders and building women's leadership within parties. The majority of respondents assert that quotas are absolutely essential for women's progress.

**“Encourage work that helps cultivate attitudinal shifts within the political parties, including firm commitments to quotas, electing women leaders and building women's leadership within parties.”**

## 5. Recommendation: Create Opportunities for Income Generation and Political Financing for Women

Limited access to funding and few income-generating opportunities hinder women's entry and advancement in politics, particularly within parties. Many women in the countries studied have no source of income nor do they participate in income-generating activities. Often most women candidates have no access to resources and their parties generally refuse to fund them. Furthermore, respondents say that in some countries, women do not have fully entrenched property rights, so that even if they do have access to property, they do not have the right to mortgage or sell property to finance their campaigns, as is often the custom with male candidates.

Findings confirm that women's financial disadvantage directly creates a political disadvantage. Women with political aspirations must either raise or already possess their own financial resources to compete for a political position. Overall, the lack of financial resources may not only dissuade women from running for office, but it also affects women's ability to build a political profile and knowledge-base. Respondents say:

*“Women cannot compete on any level with men in this regard.”* (Nepalese Participant)

*“Women get involved and then leave because it costs money to be in politics. Women need to work...men are able to stay active in the party because he already has a job and sometimes if the woman is married, she needs permission from the man. Men don't need permission.”* (Indonesian External)

A lack of financial resources is cited as a key barrier to political advancement for women across all four countries. While respondents identify invaluable social, political and cultural gains attached to women entering the political realm, they also stress the burdensome monetary costs that impede women's political participation. Fundraising trainings have helped mitigate significant barriers to women's political engagement and expanded their potential participation and influence.

Evidence in Indonesia suggests that women have become creative in their fundraising efforts. The *Arisan* process is a good example of this creativity. Through this process, women create groups that contribute weekly to a pot of money which each participant wins at some point. However, such endeavors are not the norm. In countries such as Nepal, women face tremendous personal and political challenges to fundraising as a result of poverty and inequality.

Women's financial strength is often impeded by a socially subordinate role that may result in a husband's refusal to support his wife's political aspirations. Indonesia is a good example of such a cultural barrier, where

respondents describe women largely as homemakers who lack the financial resources that allow them to readily step into political life:

*“Cash flow is an issue for women in politics...Because then the man has to financially support women for training, it is more difficult for women to say ‘let me go for a week for training.’” (Indonesian Staff)*

In addition, though women may raise some funds in isolated efforts, they lack the consistent funding mechanisms that facilitate women’s empowerment and political inclusion. Towards this end, organizations should consider establishing specific initiatives geared toward financially empowering women. As part of this resourcing effort, respondents encourage a focus on helping women identify funding streams that will help them acquire financial autonomy. A Moroccan participant says:

*“Women need to be more independent financially...Compared to male politicians, women are weak in self-financing; they have to depend on their husbands for money to campaign. Female candidates are often businesswomen because they have a lot of money.”*

Some participants encourage tailoring future trainings to consider the cultural context of the fundraising climate. Respondents are eager to develop their own fundraising skills and more opportunities that train women how to raise money are encouraged. Additionally, while funding opportunities do not necessarily need

**“Lack of financial resources is cited as a key barrier to political advancement for women across all four countries.”**

to be channeled through any particular organization, NDI and other international NGOs can serve as a key resource for identifying and facilitating financial opportunities. This will also help build organizational capacity and sustainability and over time will foster organizational self-sufficiency.

Furthermore, respondents urge a holistic approach to women’s political participation programming and training that takes women’s economic realities into account and builds in program objectives and activities that seek to ameliorate women’s poverty and lack of access to income and resources.

## **6. Recommendation: Provide Tools to Manage Personal and Political Roles and Responsibilities**

Transitioning from a full-time focus on family life to one that adds the duties of public office to family responsibilities poses challenges for women. Several participants say women’s political progress comes at the expense of their family life, often resulting in divorce, inadequate time spent with family, and time-management struggles. At the same time, women’s disproportionate household and familial responsibilities pose one of the most significant barriers to their political participation.

Political parties are not solely to blame for the lagging integration of women in politics. Several respondents say society at large also fails to support women’s political interest. For example, even if women are civic-minded, they simply may not have the time or inclination to engage politically due to burdensome work and family obligations and negative social messages regarding women and politics. In some countries, politics is often considered “dirty” and inappropriate for women. Several participants say:

*“Politics is a very difficult business. Women are not that ready to get into fights; dirty games...often happen. The fights within party structures can be tough, and sometimes makes women withdraw or leave it...To get through these party structures, [women] have to play by rules already in place, respect them. This requires a lot of time. Women are not willing to get involved in dishonesty or play dirty. It hurts women more when they are personally attacked...I heard my colleagues say, ‘Why on earth do I need this, I have my family, profession, is it worth it?’” (Serbian Participant)*

*“Women have a different starting point to get into politics. They have a lack of skills and education, and we need to increase women’s awareness. [In Indonesia we] have a stigma that politics is dirty, thus women are leaving politics for this reason. We need them to understand that they need to fight together with the community and be involved in politics on the inside in order to affect change and make people’s lives better.” (Indonesian Participant)*

Respondents also report that women who engage in politics are still expected to manage their intense household workloads. These extra demands on women’s time put them at a severe disadvantage. Serbian participants said:

*“When you see a woman, and she has her own career, family, kids...to do something new, she needs some kind of support.”*

*“Women bear a lot of housework. This exclusively relies on women, which means they have less time. So [to engage in] other spheres, such as public areas or politics, they [would] need two extra hours a day.”*

*“Women rarely get support from three sides – family, work, money. Women are generally poor. They cannot be independent...Also, women do everything in the house, [and] don’t get support from husbands. Belgrade is kind of different. But if you go deeper into rural areas, you see women are [the] backbone of the house, she does everything in the house, works [outside the home], and if she wants to do something else she doesn’t have so much time.”*

While Serbia’s examples stress the obstacles based on imbalances in the household, respondents across all four countries encourage expanding efforts to address these issues. A Nepalese participant says:

*“...Address issues of child care, family, economic development. If these things are linked with political issues, then progress will be made.”*

One aspect of training that women find critical in managing the public and private dichotomy is conflict resolution. Public life requires communication skills that enable women to manage conflict, whether that conflict comes from home, their community, their political party, or the larger political landscape. A history of discrimination disadvantages women when addressing conflict, particularly conflict that involves men. Conflict resolution training helps women develop skill sets, networking, and knowledge bases necessary to overcome these challenges. A Moroccan participant commented:

*“I learned a lot, especially around communication and, within the party, conflict management. I also learned how to deal with conflict outside of the party. Women need all the help they can get.”*

Respondents describe great satisfaction and benefit as a result of conflict resolution training sessions, and encourage more trainings and with greater frequency.

**“Women’s disproportionate household and familial responsibilities pose one of the most significant barriers to their political participation.”**

## **7. Recommendation: Facilitate Opportunities for Networking and Advocacy Practice**

Women often do not have access to the entrenched social, political and economic networks that advance the political careers of their male counterparts. Therefore, they need opportunities to both create alternative networks and the skills to navigate existing male-dominated networks.

According to respondents, women gather strength from the networking inherent to political action. Networking and lobbying gatherings capitalize on women’s natural abilities; the interpersonal support and informal education intrinsic to networking they provide can help women mitigate, to some extent, their lack of financial resources. Networking not only builds name recognition among peers and potential voters, it also leads to real relationship-building and often to the creation of formal or informal organizational structures, such as caucuses or clubs, to which male politicians often already have access.

Additionally, most respondents stress the importance of advocacy skills as key to real political access. While social and other networking venues often appear accessible to participants, lobbying efforts seem less available. Lobbying skills training offers direct opportunities for participants to begin lobbying through guided practice. Some participants indicated that:

*“Teach skills such as how to lobby, especially how to lobby men, the leader of the commissions, and especially on issues that have an impact on women. The men always have their agenda in every meeting.”* (Indonesian Participant)

*“In the future, it’s uncertain what women’s political presence will be, but women should work hard in the future because society is dominated by males. Only males make decisions; they don’t provide rights for women so women need to do it for themselves... Women need to write in the constitution about women’s rights. Women also need to lobby the parties to give women their rights overall (not just political).”* (Nepalese Participant)

Some respondents suggest that formal and informal gatherings hosted by local groups can also serve as a place to network. This type of social networking would not only serve to further build skills and trust, but would also enhance the profile of the organization hosting it. Organizers should consider additional outreach to as diverse a group of women in the community as possible in order to identify new networking and recruiting opportunities.

## **8. Recommendation: Cultivate Women Role Models**

Some attribute the absence of women role models to continued gender inequality, a lack of social and familial support, and a patriarchal society that makes it personally and logistically difficult for women to commit to a life of politics. Superficial power – and superficial changes – means women lag behind their male counterparts in critical policy areas like finance and security. Their absence in key political positions not only denies them political credibility, but respondents fear it also makes women less visible as leaders and, therefore, unable to act as the positive role models that communities, particularly women, so desperately need.

Respondents affirm that women look to each other as role models. Women want to be mentored, and they seek the consistency, support and validation critical to their struggles with social and political change. There is hope that more women in politics will raise social consciousness and elevate the status of women as politicians and role models. Respondents said:

*“Get women involved. Women in politics need to act as role models and mentors.”* (Moroccan Participant)

*“It is important to have women in high positions, because they present good role models, which empowers voters. Especially if they’re good in their jobs, if they have family, it means a successful woman: a good job, family, politician, can help lead country, good model. It’s encouraging for other women to see these examples.”* (Serbian Participant)

*“[We need] visible women role models, more women elected to raise women’s issues, in the constitution, in government and in political parties.”* (Nepalese Staff)

Towards this end, efforts can be developed to help groom strong women candidates who will also serve as key role models to help other women engage politically. Once established, these women can also help train other aspiring women. An Indonesian staff person says:

*“We have tried to create programs, skills, and materials that allow women to pursue on their own; we also help you find a mentor within your own party that can help beyond what [an outside organization like NDI] can do, given a woman’s particular political position and circumstance. We know key powerful women in every region and in some provinces. There are many things we can’t do because we’re not inside the parties, but we know people who do and the politics of who would be best-placed to steer someone in the right direction.”*

The common perception of women as more honest, more transparent and less corrupt emerges as a viable theme around which women can build their strengths, particularly as role models for other women. Respondents across all four countries, particularly Indonesia and Nepal, point to corruption as a cultural force that continues to infiltrate and even define politics. Respondents assert that corruption is integral to institutions as well as communication mechanisms – something that may or may not prove to be a significant political hurdle. An Indonesian respondent said:

**“Women are often considered to embody honesty, a sense of commitment, and generosity, which many believe is a political advantage.”**

*“Democracy is only in politics, but not in other areas. People need time to understand the meaning of democracy. It’s a process. At the end we want to improve people’s welfare, and the current condition is not good. There is still so much corruption in general, pollution, bribes, and no moral ethics, both in society and in politics.”*

In turn, many respondents encourage a focus on women to counter political corruption. Interestingly, many respondents state that the corruption that is inherent to some male leadership styles is not characteristic of women. To the contrary, women are often considered to embody honesty, a sense of commitment, and generosity, which many believe is a political advantage when reaching out to civil society. An Indonesian staff person says: *“There is a perception that women are less corrupt, not everywhere and not always, but it is sometimes a slight advantage,”* while an external respondent said:

*“Women have been through a lot, more than men, and this makes women better leaders than men. [They have] a deep commitment, [they are] not just passing by... There is still a phobia of women in Indonesia. [Women need to reach out to others] so they get to know women...for example, academics, rural women, urban women, petite trader women. They will see you’re just like them, the same, but [that women] want more justice, and will take action towards it. Women are more reliable. Let people know that. Women are...more compassionate ...and don’t break promises.”*

In Serbia, corruption shows up across parties, and an external respondent indicated: *“[Generally, there is] a secretive rhetoric [among political parties] reminiscent of Milosevic days.”* Several respondents also said that Serbia is acclimated to corruption which, alongside a measure of self-sufficiency, participates in the same process they feel hinders them from real individual progress and freedoms. Politicians implement the norms, and citizens step into them. According to a staff person: *“[Leaders] do not respect citizens enough not to manipulate their free will.”*

Many respondents say women’s greatest strengths are precisely what today’s political party terrain lacks: the capacity to be sensitive and attend to constituent voices and needs; to organize and strategize; and to effectively and transparently communicate within and across parties. Credibility and endurance bolsters women who have *“worked hard”* to acquire a position in political office. Respondents shared:

*“Women are the ones who are asking the questions, and they are the ones who work together. Women sit across the table and see another person, a person with a family, not just a person with a different opinion. They work in trying to get solutions. Serbia is still male-dominated and very macho. In the United States [people and politicians] understand they have to have a win-win. Here [in Serbia], it’s win-and-destruction-dominated. Vanquishing your opponent is the goal here. Women don’t do it that way, they don’t think that way, and they don’t act that way... They work together if there’s a disagreement. They each get their point across. There’s not a lot of that [among men] now.”* (Serbian Staff)



*“Keep in mind that women are always practicing politics in her family. Women are managers naturally; they manage their homes, husbands, and children.”* (Moroccan Participant)

*“Women are smarter, [they have a] mother’s feelings. It’s easier for women to connect with voters and constituents, and to really listen [to them, to their] complaints.”* (Indonesian Participant)

Many respondents feel women bring integrity to the political process, and those who hold office are perceived as strong women. Respondents see women as:

- Action-oriented, not speaking in platitudes but rather engaging productively with citizens;
- Committed and accessible to their constituents;
- Serious about issues of importance;
- Highly-skilled organizationally;
- Serious and honest; and
- Strong listeners.

These are all qualities that are viewed as women’s unique contributions as leaders to be cultivated as candidates, political leaders and role models.

Women bring many of the strengths that respondents describe as critical to both day-to-day and long-term quality of life changes – changes that create the platform that many respondents say citizens vote on.

## **9. Recommendation: Better Prepare International Trainers**

Some respondents point to international trainers as a double-edged sword. While participants enjoy the exposure and learning, most are frustrated by a lack of cultural sensitivity and awareness among trainers. Three key pieces of constructive criticism around international trainers include: 1) the lack of real knowledge of the host country; 2) irrelevant or inapplicable cross-country references or experience; and 3) inadequate integration of local women as (co-) trainers.

The idea of working with international trainers is appealing to respondents working to advance within political parties, and many specifically enjoy engagement with United States-based trainers. A Moroccan participant says:

*“Training with [international trainers] is very important for women’s confidence and communication skills; electoral code reform techniques training. We need more of these foreign experts with diversity and allowing for experience-sharing.”*

Developing culturally-specific training material and models should be incorporated into training sessions to ensure that trainings and other implementation tools accurately reflect local customs and needs. Participants said:

*“Programs and activities are excellent, but [an organization like NDI] would be more valuable if it tries to understand the culture of the countries where NDI works.”* (Moroccan Participant)

*“Create applicable local examples and possible local challenges.”* (Serbian Participant)

*“We need training with more real situations and simulations close to actual conditions in Indonesia and our cultural context.”* (Indonesian Participant)

Respondents suggest enhancing training efforts by including more partnership, preparation, and follow-up with host-country staff, participants, local experts and international trainers prior to and after sessions, as a way to ensure materials are relevant and appropriate. This may also mean recruiting trainers from countries whose political structure more closely parallels that of the host country.

While international trainers connect with local participants, sometimes this takes time. Adding local trainers would help bridge that connection more quickly. A Serbian participant said: “...*Offer mixed gender trainers, both men and women, and provide more local examples and trainers [as opposed to] U.S.-based.*” Respondents encourage adding local trainers to the mix.

## VI. CONCLUSION

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Women's political party programs help prepare, support and inspire participants. Despite a tone of tentativeness that comes with a history of oppression, gender inequality and political turmoil, respondents generally describe a positive ten-year forecast for women's political participation. Time also offers both hope and space for the integration of attitudinal, social and economic advances that can help inspire political progress.

The overall consistency of best practices and recommendations across all four, very different countries highlighted here signifies the ability to apply them across countries and continents worldwide. The best practices in women's political participation programs compiled here include strategic approaches that are widely effective and, indeed, necessary elements of successful women's political party efforts. These practices include:

- Implementing consistent communications trainings;
- Focusing on building leadership skills;
- Planning initiatives that unite women across parties;
- Working with parties on internal reform;
- Training women to train other women;
- Developing the capacity and preparedness of elected women;
- Exchanging information internationally; and
- Engaging youth as a way to change political attitudes and behavior.

Recommendations for strengthened efforts were consistent across a few key areas, namely:

- Integrating men into initiatives to promote women's political progress;
- Strengthening partnerships between civil society organizations and political parties;
- Increasing rural and grassroots outreach;
- Engaging women before and between elections;
- Creating opportunities for income generation and political financing for women;
- Providing tools to manage personal and political roles and responsibilities;
- Facilitating opportunities for networking and advocacy practice;
- Cultivating women role models; and
- Better preparing international trainers.

The capacity of these approaches to reach across demographics – political, socio-economic, ethnic, gender and age is considered invaluable, alongside the creation of networks and avenues that allow women to play a greater role in the political agenda. The deliberate integration of each of the relevant best practices and recommendations into women's political party programs will strengthen programs and help maximize their impact. The stage is set for women's continued political progress, and thoughtful program design will help propel women forward in this process.

While prospects are promising, many respondents indicate that fulfilling the promise of women's full political participation requires the distillation of specific ingredients, including:

- Increased internal political party democracy;
- Partnership between women and men to ensure gender equality
- A commitment to the implementation of the most effective quota systems;
- An evolution of perceptions of women as capable political leaders;
- Changes in attitudes and laws to embrace women as leaders;
- Government influence that supersedes religious influence; and
- Increased economic self-sufficiency for women.

The combination of these best practices and recommendations, implemented within a framework that recognizes the critical long- and short-term ingredients for success, provides a roadmap for effective women's political participation programs that have the potential to empower individual women leaders as well as communities and transform the social and political landscape into one that is more inclusive, more democratic and ultimately more sustainable.

## VII. COUNTRY NARRATIVES

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The following narratives provide a snapshot of women's political participation with a focus on women in political parties across Morocco, Indonesia, Serbia and Nepal. They tell the story of how the respondents across all four countries perceive women's political progress, particularly within political parties, and NDI's efforts to facilitate this process.

The narratives reflect interview findings and common themes, with some variations indicated. Regardless of the respondents' profile, perceptions generally converge; variations surface in valuable nuances as a result of different cultural, political, ethnic and national backgrounds.

It is important to note that findings are based on qualitative research that captures the perceptions, feelings and sometimes personal assessments found among those individual respondents interviewed. In turn, some findings may not parallel statistical, logistical or actual situations or conditions which experts or others may know of in any given region. This does not call into question the findings, but rather provides valuable information on the gap between perception and reality for certain respondents, which may reflect segments of the population, as well as provide grounds for exploring why these gaps exist and how program implementers can bridge them.

### MOROCCO

#### **NDI Program History**

NDI has actively worked to strengthen democratic institutions in Morocco since 1997. The Institute has created a strong partnership with the Moroccan parliament by helping to strengthen the institution through staff training, strategic communications and other organizational development programs. At the same time, the Institute has focused on reinforcing civil society's role in engaging citizens on key social and political issues facing the country and strengthening women's political participation. At the invitation of the Consultative Committee on Human Rights (CCDH), NDI organized the first international observation mission in Morocco's history for the country's September 2007 legislative elections.

NDI works to increase Moroccan women's participation as party members and legislators. The Institute partners with women MPs to enhance their effectiveness as lawmakers and shift social perceptions regarding women's leadership with the aim of encouraging more women to participate in political life. NDI offers women MPs technical assistance, hosts seminars and workshops on women's political participation, and promotes networking opportunities for women. The Institute has supported the efforts of several leading women politicians in the creation of the Women's MP Forum, a caucus open to all women MPs who wish to influence policy and highlight issues of particular relevance to women. NDI also provides technical assistance to local civil society organizations such as the *Union de l'Action Féminine (UAF)* that encourage and support women's involvement in public life. Additionally, more than 30 Moroccan women have participated in the Partners in Participation Maghreb Regional Campaign Academies in Marrakech and Rabat.

Realizing that public support for women in politics was lukewarm during the 2002 election, NDI also initiated a public outreach campaign that included billboards in 10 Moroccan cities, television and radio advertisements, and thousands of brochures and newspaper inserts. Also at that time, NDI and Moroccan civil society activists persuaded political parties to adopt a voluntary quota that would see 30 women elected on a women's only list.

The parties also agreed to put women higher on the main lists and to use party resources to promote women's candidacies. The result, which exceeded expectations, was that 35 women were elected in 2002 – a huge increase that vaulted Morocco to the top of the Arab world in women's political participation.

The total funding for NDI Morocco since 1997 has been \$11,672,981.00.

## Background

Since gaining political independence in 1956, Morocco has been home to a multi-party system based on a coalition government, and in 2008, there were 32 political parties in Morocco. With a centralized monarchy, Morocco's King has historically guided the country and through him, the country's four main government ministers and Prime Minister are appointed. Today's king, Mohammed VI, embodies a western-minded ideology, shifting the country from the more conservative rule of King Hassan II. Morocco has also witnessed shifts in religious influence, with alternating cycles of liberalism and conservatism, particularly in urban areas. More recently some Moroccans describe a resurgence of fundamentalist Islam witnessed particularly in urban areas.

The 2007 parliamentary elections were significant, considered to be the most “democratic” election in Morocco's history. However, the electorate made their displeasure with political parties and government known with a remarkably low voter turnout rate of 37 percent, compared to 58 percent in 1997 and 52 percent in 2002.

As part of its gradual democratic shift, Morocco is slowly witnessing the political integration of women. In 2002, Morocco adopted an electoral quota of 30 seats in parliament for women running on the national list, in addition, parties were mandated in the last election to field 30 women candidates on their lists. Prior to the creation of this quota, no more than four women had concurrently served in the Moroccan Parliament. In 2007, seven of the 34 total government ministers appointed were women; and 34 women were elected to parliament – a drop from 35 in 2002: this startled some, who consider this an indication of the ongoing challenges women face. Nonetheless, enthusiasm remains high, and the 2009 municipal elections are motivating women to mobilize as candidates and to engage women's political participation at all levels.

In the run-up to the 2009 elections, women's organizations are raising the issue of women's weak political representation at the local level. Some of these organizations are advocating adoption of a zipper list system, while other, primarily more conservative women's groups, are pushing political parties to sign onto a code of conduct that would include women on their party lists. Currently, the new code is under discussion in the parliament, where many members are calling its constitutionality into question, despite the fact that similar mechanisms have been adopted for previous legislative elections. This will be a decisive issue for women's political representation at the local level.

Morocco's revised family code law, or *mudawana*, adopted in 2004, is among its greatest successes for women. This brought equal responsibility for husbands and wives in the home; abolished the requirement of wives to obey their husbands; and raised the minimum marrying age of women from 15 to 18 years old. Additionally, the revision of the family code law brought equal rights for divorce, which had been referenced by many respondents as highly meaningful.

A total of 21 interviews were conducted in Morocco between December 3 and December 6, 2007. Interviews were conducted with four NDI staff members, 13 NDI women's political party program participants and four external respondents.

## Democracy on the Horizon

Morocco is in political transition as it moves toward increased democracy. Considerable advances for women in the political process, particularly NDI program participants, have transpired in the past ten years. While there are obstacles for women as they seek to participate in political life many respondents describe Morocco's social landscape as undergoing a crucial and positive evolution. Enthusiasm is accompanied by a sense of realism: change is promising, but slow-coming. Participants indicated:

*“Morocco is moving on a democratic track. Today is not the Morocco of the 1970s, things are better. It is a dynamic situation in politics, and we are a communication culture, all thanks to women’s action in politics and culture at all levels. The 2007 elections were the real test, an awakening. It is not acceptable to have 70 percent of the population not voting. Even with civil [society] groups’ efforts to get people out...[This turnout shows a] lack of confidence in the system, in government, among voters. Or it is indifference or timing of elections (middle of summer, school year, Ramadan). All had an impact on the turnout in some way. We try to move forward. Women are ‘not part of the program’ generally; this is a tribal society still.”*

*“Moroccans are more politically involved, making decisions, and involved in the election process. In the last 15 years, much of the transition has been transpiring; election codes have changed, things are more organized now. For example, there are communal and legislative elections. That means a move toward democracy.”*

Many are encouraged by changes that illustrate women's progress, evidenced across sectors. Economically, women are more involved and enjoying improved work opportunities that have come, in part, with legislation such as the equity and reconciliation law and the right to work law. Politically, since 1991, both women's activism and their participation in public life have increased significantly as a result of the one million women's signatures which were gathered to reform the family code law. The heightened sensitivity to gender equality that is perceived throughout the country's media is considered a visible sign of progress. Participants said:

*“[Things are] super, going forward. [We] started from nothing and things are going up. Moroccans wanted changes, and we are seeing changes in all areas, from 1998 to 2007.”*

*“[Morocco has made a] big jump, clear change; and we are expecting more changes, in all fields, and in association with NGOs or political parties. Citizens are taking more and more control of their lives.”*

*“Things are moving in the right direction. There is a new philosophy, and a new political landscape... We have 35 women elected to parliament. [These are] all significant changes. Family code revisions, more freedoms, these are all positive changes. And there are a large number of CSOs that are active.”*

*“Women have a voice in politics... Today, women are represented, not just on women’s issues, but on all issues.”*

The revision of the *mudawana* is tremendously significant for the equality of Moroccan women, as is evidenced by the frequent mention of *mudawana* throughout the interviews. Many believe that this will also contribute to women's political advancement by leveling the playing field for men and women, though it may be long in coming.

Women are inspired by King Mohammed VI's progressive views, and they sense a broadening support by the public toward a truly democratic and more equitable Moroccan society.

While hopeful about the future of Moroccan women's roles in politics, various respondents express some concern about their ten-year forecast for women and were frank in articulating the obstacles that remain, including the reality that Morocco's political system is couched in a socio-historical culture of “machismo,” where men “*run the show and women follow.*” Another concern includes the sense that a fear of change among Moroccans could result in information and power hoarding, which participants identify as people “*looking out only for themselves.*”

While respondents highlight the positive political direction of contemporary Morocco, an increasingly strong upsurge of fundamentalist Islam, poses some concern to them. Participants shared:

*“There is some fear that [some] women are being manipulated. But they are strong, and not easily convinced by Islamist conservatives. These women work side by side with men in a strong way...”*

*“The growth of the Islamist political party – this is dangerous. It is appealing to undereducated women and telling them negative things about women in parliament. There is one case of three families in Casablanca who were to fully veil and take out of school their daughters; this participant convinced them otherwise. But this direction is dangerous.”*

Additionally, not all women are convinced of the strength of women’s political voice in Morocco. Some respondents affirm the existence of a strong female voice in politics while others are less persuaded:

*“Yes, women have a voice, of course. There are seven women in government as ministers. The King is fighting for this renaissance. There is proof [that women have a voice]. Before you could not divorce, or man could get a divorce by going to court and never letting his wife know. Now, you can go together to court. Today, the king follows up on all issues, there is accountability. And that means a transition to democracy [as opposed to none before].”*

*“Women have a weak voice in [electoral] politics...women prefer civil society activism because they are rewarded with success and leadership positions there [unlike in political parties].”*

More noticeable is the current disparity in areas where women have a voice in Morocco’s public life. Women are said to have a much stronger voice in civil society than within political parties, and hence, the ability to set the political agenda.

## **Progressive King a Source of Inspiration Among Women**

King Mohammed VI emerges as a person who paves the way for change with his openness and his view of women as equal partners in the country’s development

The King’s ideology is a key driving force for many of these strong, aspiring women. Enthusiasm is notable among participants:

*“As a feminist and political activist, I have seen many advances since the new king. Women’s progress [is evident, for example, with] the family code reform. [He is] actively involved. Good reforms are visible, some of which have favored women, for example both nationality law and legal status of women; [we] have seen work reform as well. The quota system helps women too.”*

*“The government and the King have established a real dialogue about issues in Morocco. More about transparency, how they are developing [a] view of Morocco.”*

*“[We can] now see movement. Even if you are poor in Morocco now you see movement, especially in cities. The king is moving [things]. Before the September 2007 elections, I didn’t believe in change, not between 1999 and 2001. I was thinking of leaving Morocco, I have daughters and am an active woman. I did not trust the king in the beginning. He changed my views with the family code law. [There are] new laws, and approaches, with this king”*

Respondents, particularly participants, describe a “renaissance” spurred by King Mohammed VI. Respondents feel a mutual relationship with the King; he supports women’s progress by passing women’s rights legislation, voicing a progressive perspective, and requiring political change, while women are expressing an active commitment to political engagement and embracing change. In fact, while the number of women in office is highly significant (it was referenced by every respondent), the revision of Morocco’s family code law, and the



King's strong support of it, is possibly viewed as an even greater indication of change and hope for the women interviewed. While respondents do not explore their perspectives regarding the origins of King Mohammed's progressive politics, some Moroccans more broadly point to his European education as foundational.

While the King's influence has helped advance women in Morocco, several respondents worry that his sole efforts are not enough. A participant said: *"The King walks the walk; he doesn't just talk the talk. He is pro-woman. But he can't do it alone."* Respondents are confident change lies on the horizon, but they also say the King cannot do it alone.

## Lagging Political Parties Disappoint

Within this context, a specific entity is cited as holding women back: political parties. Most, though not all, respondents describe a civil society where women have a voice – in direct contrast to political parties, where they do not. In fact, amidst the inspiration that comes with women's visible political progress, political parties lag behind the new political energy and stand out among the landscape of key players as the least supportive of women's political empowerment. As more women are represented in political office, respondents generally describe a political party culture that sharply lacks the internal democratic process it is meant to uphold.

Most respondents feel that any significant strides made toward gender equality have not come with the help of political parties, where a strong male bias remains, most notably in their internal organizational attitudes and structure. Participants say:

*"Political parties constitute a big part of society, but there is little internal movement or access for activists to decision-making. The elevator is out of order."*

*"Right now, men and women feel an imposition of women on political parties, and no one, neither government, political parties or royalty is taking ownership for that."*

*"Women are active in parties, but currently no parties are convinced of the [importance of] gender issues; they just use women as pawns and objects. This is because of machismo and because women are now seen as competition for men...As long as the current generation of political party leaders is there, women won't achieve much... There is no motivation, therefore, for women to get involved."*

Further disappointment stems from perceptions of political parties as being shaped by personal interests, which is a symptom of underdevelopment, according to several respondents.<sup>4</sup> In addition, many respondents believe the existence of too many political parties dilutes political party platforms, and that many of their members are not only resistant to change, but also unprepared to implement it. Respondents say that those involved in the effort to shift this culture – including NDI, and particularly the King – face difficult challenges. A participant said:

*"[We are] disappointed in political parties. This King really wants democracy – [it] shows in his choices of prime minister, and in [the laws he supports]. He's giving us a lesson. But it's not followed by parties. The King cannot build democracy alone; he has a problem – he wants democracy and efficiency in people, and he is really efficient, he moves quickly because he's essentially making up for lost time. He wants to educate parties, but gives them responsibility and they are not necessarily made up of efficient people. People in political parties need more experience."*

Whereas the women's movement in Morocco has truly benefited from the presence of a King who wants a modern country, any support by political party leaders for women is perceived as superficial. Participants describe their own political party experiences in which men have made comments including: *"Why are you worried*

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<sup>4</sup> Interestingly, one participant describes this larger political mentality being adopted by women as well as men: "[Some] women are not fighting for the benefit of all women, but only for themselves individually. There is no encouragement for women to be involved in politics, only to have a commune or parliament seat."

*[about party lists] when you're on the national [candidate] list?" and "See, now you have women in office, you should be happy."*

Though numbers indicate growing success in integrating women into party political structures, some participants are frustrated by the lack of attitudinal change among men, and even some women, within political parties. The democratic process infusing Morocco is not reflected within political parties.

Not being genuinely engaged or taken seriously by political parties makes many respondents, particularly participants who are actively engaged in politics, feel tokenized or like “dolls.” A climate of male hegemony, as one respondent names it, is evidenced in political parties’ resistance to change, particularly regarding women in leadership positions.

Women’s political struggle is one manifestation and component of broader socio-political changes in Morocco. Several respondents say the low voter turnout in the 2007 election is a greater indication of a societal desire for change rather than apathy. For many, a low turn-out is a sign of the public’s demand for increased accountability and transparency among elected officials and may reflect an irreversible change among Moroccan citizens, one that comes from the profound integration of democratic ideals into public attitudes and civic engagement in the political process. Participants said:

*“Political parties are dominated by male mentality and hegemony, and there is a lack of communication by parties and citizens, a lack of ‘politics of proximity.’ [In other words], party offices are less accessible to the public; they are only open on election day or during the campaign period; parties are inactive until the campaign period, and that leads to citizen apathy. There is no outreach to the different regions.”*

*“Society has changed but parties have not. What used to mobilize people no longer does...we no longer have [the strong definitions like the East versus West and the Cold War]. People are less educated and [have less] political interest than before. Now people are more demanding of ministers, and asking ‘what are you doing for me?’ Party leaders and ministers are not used to that.”*

*“The 37 percent turnout is based on voluntary and not obligatory voting laws, and indicates real democracy; though it also means 63 percent did not vote.”*

*“Morocco doesn’t have political parties really, they are there but not there. The year 2007 marks the start of creating good strong and efficient parties...Low turnout says citizens are no longer willing to be part of a weak political system. They want more.”*

A lack of engagement both at the polls and specifically among younger voters is also attributed to a sense of disappointment in candidate options. Many believe that parliament has no real power under the monarchy to change or improve citizens’ lives or to lower high unemployment rates. Many are disappointed by political parties’ lack of vision for the future and some associate this discontent with increasing drug use among youth.

Though the 2007 turnout brought gains for women in Morocco, there is also a feeling among some respondents that women were largely excluded in the last election. Some respondents, participants in particular, say that women who were formerly elected were not placed on the national list, and that money determines women’s political inclusion more than political party support. Money is one of the greatest barriers to women aspirants. Political parties in Morocco receive no campaign funding from the government and rely largely on individual candidates to finance their own campaigns, thereby putting women at a disadvantage. According to Moroccan political experts, what little money parties do have to fund campaigns is rarely, if ever, provided to women candidates.

The biggest barrier to women candidates, however, is political parties. Some respondents say that women are held back by an internal political party system that does not integrate the evolving external political democracy

of Morocco. In fact, most respondents tell a story of an internal party system that is scrambling to stay relevant. For example, women who make it onto party lists are elected by friends or family, rather than by a broad-based constituency. Those in office find it hard to acquire access to the core political machinery. Most political parties reject suggestions by progressive-minded members of internal restructuring and including women into positions of power. Program participants said:

*“When I first started, people said we need a specific women’s association and I thought, ‘Why? We’re in a male and female society.’ Now that I’m involved I realize we do need a women’s association; men in-fight, and even more so with women. They use women just to say, ‘Look, we have women on board.’”*

*“Leaders have been there forever; there is no renewal. Who you know at the top is more important than your skills in your chances to advance. For example, one party head is 90 and his 60 year old son is the head of the youth branch.”*

*“Today’s political parties are afraid of accountability. They should move toward democracy. The quota is 30 percent women in political parties. In parliament and communes, it is 50 percent. That is very good. But the national list is not recruiting the best people.”*

*“Women are recruited as activists but not as leaders. Men are resistant to women as leaders because of the long-standing [male-dominant] mentality. Efforts are made to involve women, but the pace of change and democratic transition is turtle-like... Society is not prepared to push for those party changes; it is still a top-down decision-making process, and women are not at the top. Parties are not prepared to make those changes.”*

A similar sentiment is expressed by a staff member who said:

*“Women work hard in the parties and do the organizing, but they don’t have any decision-making power; 2007 was a turning point, when women proved themselves capable as organizers.”*

Gains are particularly tough for younger leaders, women as well as men, who have a fresher political vision than longstanding parties and their members. In fact, some say a manifestation of disillusion, and some negative change that has surfaced in Morocco’s political landscape, is the presence of fewer young people involved in politics than twenty years ago. Within this climate, “opening of doors” to youth, particularly young women, as leaders and decision-makers is a challenge. A participant said:

*“Parties are in chaos. They don’t play their role of organizing citizen interests – they need to restructure themselves internally. They need to open doors to women as leaders and decision-makers, and they need to open doors to youth. We need to reformulate how and why to create new parties based on a goal of human development.”*

These younger people with fresh ideas are precisely what many Moroccan respondents feel are needed to bring about long-term socio-political shifts. Both staff and participants stress the lack of internal democracy among political parties, lack of party renewal, and party leaders who are resistant to change because “it is hard to give up the power they have.”

Political change and visionary change, according to respondent narratives, requires social and cultural shifts. The Moroccan women interviewed are both highly receptive and tremendously empowered by the dramatic progress inspired by the King’s vision; political parties, on the other hand, are clambering around how to deal – or not deal – with it. Such factionalized responses reflect the ingrained patriarchal nature of the culture, as well as an antiquated approach that also resists the possibility of including younger leaders. Interestingly, women respondents describe an evolution in which the King has spoken for women more so than for youth, surprising given his young age.

## Party Reform Requires Attitudinal Shift

Not surprisingly, respondents say the male-centered mentality infusing political parties is a substantial hurdle. Women see these patriarchal attitudes restricting their access to political party structures on the one hand and hampering the ability to meet the needs of an enthusiastic citizenry on the other. Based on the respondents interviewed, women look for support and leadership from parties that seem to most forcefully resist change, particularly as it relates to gender equality and women's political leadership.

Disappointment in political parties does not take away from the respondents' confidence that Moroccan women are making strides and are ready to tackle internal political party reform – particularly with the help of NDI.

Many respondents highlight transparency as a core requirement for internal political party reform. One participant said:

*“We need laws and rules for implementation that are precise and transparent. This includes quotas, as earlier discussed, as well as other mechanisms to make women viable candidates and more active in political life.”*

Specific political party changes are encouraged both by participants and staff members as a primary way to engage women in meaningful leadership roles. These include the adoption of:

- Quotas for women and youth in leadership, for a limited time;
- Internal rules reform;
- Transparency in decision-making;
- Increased democratization; and
- Expanded and inclusive decision-making processes.

Attitudinal shifts need to be channeled from top layers through the rest of the party. A participant said:

*“No matter how hard we work with women, we’ll never see the changes we want without changes to the party. [What’s needed is] to sensitize people to make them aware of the existence of possibility of women leaders [through] civic education – NDI should do that.”*

Respondents' visions for progress consistently reveal a reliance on NDI's facilitation, and in some cases, guidance. Often this entails a push for partnership on a variety of levels – i.e., the more skilled entities working to push change, the better.

## Quota Key Start to Women's Progress

Progress and determination are evidenced in various areas of Morocco's social and political landscape. Several respondents point to the national list and quota system as benchmarks of change, as well as a 20 percent quota imposed within some parties, which has led to more women in executive offices and better integration of women into a predominately male political system. One respondent attributed such change to activism since the 1990s and the work of women's civil society and political networks conducting awareness-raising campaigns in all regions of country, influencing party leaders.

The implementation of a national quota, for many respondents, has served women's progress by requiring their participation in public life. Quotas help women enter politics by establishing a presence where they were previously absent.

While more women are perceived to be in power than before the 2002 quota, “*it’s not genuine*,” said a participant. In fact, several respondents said patriarchal discourse is still employed, and resistance to women’s leadership in parties is due to the persistent patriarchal mentality that dominates all aspects of Moroccan society in which there is a longtime oppression and discrimination against women. As a result, the pace of change is slow. A participant said: “*You can change the system, but it takes time to change the mentality.*” Quotas are just a start.

Several participants point to structural barriers and a lack of true power among women in political leadership roles. While they are taking on more leadership positions, women lack real power – due to low rank, lack of knowledge and credibility, or a climate in which men refuse to take them seriously. Respondents across the board feel that the ascension of women into positions of real power is critical if they are to succeed in office – and society. Participants are most emphatic about this:

*“[There is] improved access for women because of the quota system, but women still need to be in higher decision-making positions...they must be key leaders.”*

*“Nothing will change if women do not have decision-making ability in the political process. [We can get this] through a quota system. We have this nationally, and need it locally. [NDI can have a role in this by] talking about it in meetings.”*

*“In order to have women in political positions you have to force it by law...[There are 30 women in parliament] but they were chosen with no criterion so they really have no power, no way to fight for other women. They were not democratically selected, but instead, chosen by friends. In parliament, they are not in a position to disagree with men, which just weakens women.”*

Politically active women largely remain in traditionally “*female*” roles, as defined by respondents, and are less present in more powerful decision-making roles in sectors such as the economy or security. The concentration of women’s leadership in sectors viewed as traditionally female such as health and education leaves some convinced that women still lag in true political power, and that this precludes women from acquiring political equity with their male counterparts. It does, though, give them political entry, which may eventually bring easier access to power and, in turn, an increased capacity for making change.

Nevertheless, these concerns are eclipsed by the inspiration brought by visible changes and a belief that things are moving in the right direction. For example, some respondents say the perceived disadvantage of such “*female*” roles can be leveraged into greater influence through activism and advocacy, and several respondents point to activists – often women – as key to past and ongoing changes. Women who enter politics through civic activist channels acquire core substantive skills that benefit them in political office.

## **Women Show High Appeal as Politicians**

Despite some significant hurdles, both structural and cultural respondents are invigorated both by concrete signs of women’s advances in politics and their tangible potential. Political party behavior is only relatively discouraging when viewed within the broader context of women’s progress. Respondents feel, on a general level, that women candidates are well-received, in many cases especially by other women, and many highlight the particular appeal of women as candidates:

*“Given power, she could do [everything] well. Men are afraid of women now; they are competition.”* (Participant)

*“Keep in mind that women are always practicing politics in her family. Women are managers naturally; they manage their homes, husbands, and children.”* (Participant)

*“Women are better listeners, and people are fed up with politicians. Women provide patience and compassion [that voters are looking for].” (Staff)*

Women are also viewed as particularly strong at reaching out to and maintaining relationship with their constituents.

*“An elected woman [is] always present in the area where she is elected, whereas men forget about their area. Women are committed to their duties, are easy to contact and communicate with. They listen, more than men, and are more emotional and closer to citizens.” (Staff)*

Furthermore, many respondents feel women bring integrity to the political process, more so than men do. Those who hold office are strong women, and they are perceived as such. Respondents see women as:

- Action-oriented;
- Accessible to their constituents;
- Serious about issues of importance;
- Serious and honest; and
- Strong listeners.

Some participants consider women natural managers and unquestionably capable, and for many respondents, women candidates express an inner-strength and self-confidence and carry an awareness of their own assets, including integrity and honesty. *“We are more likely to do the right thing,”* said one participant.

## **Rural Inclusion Needed for Change**

Respondents highlight the importance of making special efforts to target rural areas, where women are harder to reach. Respondents drew attention to lagging political vision in rural areas as a result of social problems such as increased illiteracy and poverty. Participants, some of whom have worked extensively in both urban and rural areas, said:

*“The king and political parties all need to work on rural areas...because big cities are moving, but rural areas represent Morocco. [It's like] there are two countries in Morocco – the developed and the underdeveloped, where there are less jobs, less water.”*

*“[Things are] better than in the past, but they could always be even better. [We're on our] way...to having a voice to change the mentality that women are [in fact] strong enough to lead. Women in rural areas are a challenge for urban women; to convince rural women they can compete with men. [It is my] objective to get [women in roles as] municipal leaders.”*

*“[There is still] a lot to do, women are still behind men. We need training, assistance, support, advocacy, capacities. Women's rights are not full yet. Illiteracy and poverty [is still common] in rural areas. Rural women are not aware of what's happening in Morocco, especially on the political scene, which is a big enough challenge for urban women. NGOs should think about these kinds of programs.”*

*“Urban women have a strong voice and can impose it in politics; rural women don't. They tend to follow the advice of their husbands.”*

Concrete obstacles such as illiteracy, poverty and political ignorance are part of a larger challenge that lies in getting women involved in political life. According to some participants, political leaders, and even NDI must work with broader cultural layers as they attempt to create systemic political change. A participant said:

*“What is required is a mentality change that corresponds to a practical change – this starts at home, and is a big thing to tackle because no matter what NDI offers, when a woman, especially in a rural area, goes home to their conservative men, it’s a challenging transition. In some cases, it is even a safety issue.”*

An urban perspective gives women inspiration and confidence in the future of their political strength and possibilities, and most respondents believe that cities show the greatest cultural changes, including improvements in gender equality.

The desire to help shape a culture that invites their daughters to engage equally with men is a driving force for some politically active respondents, and real change must start with comprehensive rural and urban outreach. A participant captures this when she said:

*“[I was very] disappointed and not involved in politics until 2002, when the King offered movement; [then] I was drawn to try to change things, not just earn money and work. For my daughters, I had to act.”*

Rural areas pose different issues for the upcoming 2009 elections. To have real progress, respondents said: *“We have to pay attention to issues, to people.”* Generally, respondents, and participants in particular, hope to see: women leading women and men, not just women; more votes for women; a woman as prime minister; and strong women engaged across the political landscape.

## **NDI Considered Highly Effective and Trustworthy**

Overall, a resounding sense of gratitude toward NDI emerges among participants, who consider NDI much more than just another NGO: it is considered a key political change agent whose efforts stream into social, personal and economic areas. Respondents view NDI as a critical resource to building women’s skills and political participation through training, enhancing existing strengths, and cultivating the tools necessary to be competitive in the male-dominated political environment.

In Morocco, NDI is quickly identified as an *“American”* organization. For some, this association initially came with some skepticism. However, over time, NDI’s accessibility and support made it a trusted entity. In fact, perceptions of NDI as an American organization have changed as participants worked with NDI. Not only has the organization managed to overcome initial reluctance – even suspicion – by Moroccan participants concerning its American identity, NDI has also managed to improve perceptions of American politics as a whole. Participants discussed this:

*“NDI has broken through the misconception of U.S. organizations and has bridged a gap between civic organizations, Morocco and the United States. Personally, I didn’t ever want to go to the United States. But now I do.”*

*“Before political parties thought NDI was here as Americans. Now it’s the opposite, all think NDI does a good job for Morocco. I think NDI is the only institution really contributing to getting more women into political parties; they organize trainings just for women. Sometimes women get a gold certificate by participating in NDI’s workshops – not only are they proud of this, the women, but others in political parties want that certificate – including men.”*

*“[NDI is] an American institute that trains women to democratize the political landscape.”*

*“[NDI is] an American organization whose interest is in politics, making it more evolved, technical and structured. NDI is helping political parties be better structured and run their campaigns.”*

NDI is applauded for its substantive know-how, its commitment to exceptional political trainings for women, and for its overall personal accessibility and support. A participant said:

*“I have learned so much from NDI’s political communication, focus groups and public speaking...In one year, everyone knows me in the ministry, government, media and politics because NDI allowed me to learn. I have offered trainings to men in my party, and know how to convince and communicate with voters, both urban and rural. To give back training is very important.”*

NDI ranks high among its peers in perceived effectiveness. One staff member quoted a political party member as saying he would, “do anything with NDI because logistically they are excellent, and they have trainers who listen, who understand what’s going on, and who want to help.” The same political party member said he has walked out of other NGO training sessions.

The trust expressed by past and current program participants is apparent in their willingness to be forthcoming about what they consider to be NDI’s most effective and least effective practices. A participant said: “Sometimes NDI wants to lead, but faces resistance from their target groups, who want help but don’t want to be told what to do. NDI has learned this lesson; there has been an evolution of action. Originally NDI wanted to do all training as multi-party, but now they do it differently; [now they also work with single parties].”

A striking contrast emerges between the trust gained by NDI and that lost by political parties. A participant said:

*“Women believe in NDI, but they don’t believe in their political party, because NDI listens to their needs and acts on them. NDI is neutral, it offers trainings. Political parties never ask what is in our hearts, what we want to change. NDI has asked that.”*

Interestingly, some women say they were reluctant to engage with NDI upon the start of their relationship with the Institute, a skepticism that quickly developed into a relationship defined by trust and inspiration. Today, NDI is described as a core political, social and, indirectly, cultural change agent that mobilizes and amplifies women’s capacities. Perceptions that NDI is determined to tap into and cultivate women’s potential distinguishes it from other NGOs.

## **Training Tools Prepare Women and Contribute to Cultural Shifts**

Respondents were asked to provide as much detail about their perceptions of NDI’s most effective efforts to help women engage in Morocco’s political process, as well as those efforts that were less useful or even frustrating. Participants discussed their specific experiences with NDI, and most highlight a broad appreciation of NDI’s active role in motivating and supporting politically interested Moroccan women.

At the same time, NDI is considered highly respectful of party autonomy, though many also emphasized NDI’s leadership role in many initiatives. Participants said:

*“NDI has a big role in women becoming political active, and taking lead roles within their parties.”*

*“NDI’s work gives it a better public image. The programs have been well-managed and successful. They have proved that NDI was not trying to intervene and change the party. NDI respects party autonomy.”*

NDI training efforts are applauded by respondents across the board; in fact, the most consistent recommendation from respondents, particularly former and current participants, is more, more and more. Participants refer to NDI’s practical assistance, and more specifically, its trainings, as providing a core foundation for larger socio-cultural transitions. A participant said:

*“NDI does a great job, [it helps put an] end to (oppressive) mentalities, and makes political parties consider women important...I think NDI is the only institution really contributing to getting more women into politics and political parties; NDI organizes trainings just for women.”*



Inasmuch as NDI's programs require the integration of men into political training designed to develop women's leadership capabilities, respondents saw NDI as an entity that can help ease the restrictions of male-dominated thinking in the parties. This indicates that though respondents do not directly attribute large-scale social changes to the organization, they perceived NDI as an actor capable of playing a critical role in helping effect cultural shifts. A participant said:

*“There is still a lot to do. Women are still ‘behind the man.’ [This society] needs training, assistance, support, advocacy, capacities. Women’s rights are not full yet; there is still illiteracy and poverty in rural areas. Women are not aware of what’s happening in Morocco or especially in political scene, big challenge for urban women. NGOs should think about these kinds of programs.”*

Through conflict resolution trainings, NDI helps develop skill sets, networking and a knowledge base for women eager to grow and advance within the political arena. In their lifetime, women are witnessing historic changes in Morocco's political and cultural make-up. Ultimately, NDI is not only an NGO that helps develop organizational and personal skills, it also contributes dramatically to these historic shifts.

The profound empowerment that comes with the acquisition of practical tools and development of communication skills – i.e. public speaking – is conveyed through participant stories that reveal radical transformation. Trainings in conflict resolution, public speaking, campaigning and other valuable skills address cultural barriers and transitions, not just practical knowledge. Some women go so far as to attribute the election of women leaders to NDI's efforts. A participant said: *“There are seven women in government thanks, indirectly, to NDI.”*

NDI is considered among the most effective – and sometimes the only – organization that truly works toward democratic participation for women in Morocco. *“NDI is a friend”* is a common attitude. Some even suggest that as an organization, NDI has an advantage over Morocco's political parties when it comes to working on gender equality issues, as well as other social issues. A participant said: *“Political parties lack credibility to work on these issues. They must be pursued through associations. NGOs must work on these issues.”*

## Conclusion

The overall tenor of the interviews was positive and any reservations about the challenges to women's political progress do not undercut the optimism evident among respondents. Women's political advancement will occur as a result of the enhancement of political consciousness among Moroccans as a whole, or as a participant said:

*“There is a need for general political literacy. We must debunk the myth that politics is a male culture and male game. There is a lack of political consciousness among people, women in particular.”*

Amidst struggles and resistance, there is a sense that women are making political headway. In fact, several women suggest that the next election may bring a woman prime minister. One respondent, an NDI program participant, said she would like for it to be her.

## NDI Program History

NDI has been active in Indonesia since 1996. Among its diverse program activities in the country, NDI has been assisting local civic groups conduct independent observation of Indonesia's local and national elections using quick count observations, voter attitude surveys, and voter registration audits, and has implemented a participatory budgeting and expenditure tracking program to provide local civic groups and citizens with a clear understanding of budget management. More recently, NDI has worked with former GAM (Free Aceh Movement) combatants and political prisoners to assist them in their transformation from an armed militant group to a political force in the province's ongoing efforts at maintaining peace. In the lead up to the 2009 elections, NDI is currently working to strengthen the ability of national-level political parties to effectively compete in the political process.

NDI continues to support reform efforts within Indonesia's major political parties by providing comparative global expert advice, information, and skills-building training to party leaders and instructors at national, provincial, and local levels. NDI is also working with National Legislature (DPR) leaders, members, and party bloc leaders, to improve constituency outreach efforts. Emphasis is placed on media relations and public speaking to underline the need to incorporate citizen input in the policy process. Particular attention is paid to women's issues in all aspects of the program, including strategies that specifically include women constituents in outreach efforts. NDI is also helping to enhance the skills of DPR professional staff by addressing issues such as staffing and support services for members, the role of a legislative opposition, and legislative independence.

Efforts to increase women's political participation have focused on building women's capacity to contest elections and working with the Women's Political Caucus of Indonesia (KPPI), a multi-party, voluntary organization of women from all the major parties of the country. Formed in 2000 with assistance from NDI, KPPI has made significant gains in increasing women's effective engagement in politics, both in elections and in political leadership. NDI has worked with KPPI to increase and strengthen the organization's ability to recruit members, address key topics of concern to women, and identify and train women political leaders. Prior to the 2004 elections, NDI worked with KPPI to train women candidates and to encourage parties to include more women on party lists.

The total funding for NDI Indonesia since 1996 has totaled \$24,878,023.00.

## Background

With over 7,000 islands between Asia and Australia, Indonesia hosts 300 local languages and a vast ethnic diversity that includes the world's largest Muslim population. Great changes in recent years – an Asian financial crisis, the fall of President Suharto after 32 years in office, the first free elections since the 1950s, and a devastating tsunami – have brought Indonesia both unprecedented freedom and turmoil.

On June 7, 1999, Indonesia held its first free elections since 1955 to choose a new national parliament; 48 political parties participated. Elections were also held at the provincial and local levels. This was the first election since the collapse of President Suharto's regime and the ensuing return to democracy. In 2003, with the strength of a growing democracy behind them and with women holding 45 out of 462 seats in parliament, Indonesian women's groups inspired passage of national legislation regarding recommendations on the inclusion of women on party lists. The passage of this bill – one that President Megawati Sukarnoputri's Indonesian Democratic Party-Struggle (PDI-P) party initially opposed – recommends that 30 percent of all candidates in parliamentary elections be women.

During the time of the interviews, women held 65 out of 550 parliamentary seats. Respondents described a generally calm political climate, although, some expressed concern about political tensions outside of Jakarta, in areas including Aceh.

A total of 22 Indonesians were interviewed in Jakarta from December 10 to 13, 2007. Respondents included four NDI staff members, ten NDI program participants and four individuals in the external category.

## Democracy is Worth the Wait

A history of women's oppression, persistent male dominance, and a lack of civic education around gender equality contributes to a slow pace of progress for women in Indonesia.

At the same time, respondents are inspired by democracy and determined for women to play a greater role in it. Indications of real democratic progress are tangible, and can be found in areas such as heightened freedom of expression and two elections unmarred by violence. Respondents said:

*"[We are seeing] more freedom of expression [like in the] newspapers. [It's not like] in the new order era. You can establish any kind of organization now."* (External)

*"In general, I think we have a situation that is conducive to democracy. We have to pay the consequences of transitioning to democracy because the majority of the people are not educated and we don't have enough experience with democracy."* (Participant)

The increased presence of women in politics highlights larger democratic shifts, and most respondents consider today's presence of women in politics a potential launching pad for further success in Indonesia's 2009 elections. Advances, such as the Helsinki Peace Process, which ended 30 years of armed conflict in the Indonesian province of Aceh, and the conflict resolution process after years of civil unrest on the island of Ambon, are among the markers of democratic progress. In contrast to the Suharto era, when most respondents indicated that women were politically powerless, today's political landscape is full of promise. Respondents said:

*"Women [are now visible] in politics. During Suharto, women did not have a role in politics. Today they do more so, in general things are good."* (Participant)

*"It is almost ten years after Suharto stepped down and the reformation started. Following the reforms there has been some progress, such as freedom of the press, decentralization, and more power given to local economies... Since 1996 we have had four constitutional amendments, which have created a balance of power between the legislature, judiciary and executive. We have direct local elections, which we are happy about. We have a new constitutional court, two chambers of parliament, many judicial commissions, and many new other commissions. However, the legislature has assumed too much power and in some cases is creating more bureaucratic procedures as a result of the need for legislative approval."* (External)

Several respondents identify other benchmarks as hopeful indications that women are making political progress. An external respondent said:

*"There is a better provision on affirmative action, parliament implemented new rules; it is better than before when we only had article 65 which stated that, in the list of candidacies, the political parties had to pay attention to the gender equality principle."*

While the end of the Suharto regime brings more political possibilities, it also seems to come at a cost. As respondents describe increased poverty and less economic stability that have coincided with increased democracy, a hint of nostalgia emerges for the benefits of Suharto's welfare era. A couple of respondents said:

*“[Things are moving in a] positive direction largely, but [there are] some negatives because of [the] condition of people here: the poverty and the political situation is not mature yet because democracy is still a consolidating process. But up until now we have been learning about democracy. It is not easy to change the paradigm of people; the problem is about poverty; it’s that the economic situation, health conditions and basic needs of people are not moving in a positive direction, particularly since the 1997 recession. We hope the next leader will change the life of people in Indonesia, but first we need to change the political situation. We’re not satisfied with the president because he hasn’t solved these problems.” (Participant)*

*“We are witnessing more democracy, but economic development is not as good, it doesn’t reflect the strides in democracy. I think democracy is better since Suharto, and the economy will catch up and follow. But things are not better for others, because [during Suharto things were] more affordable and there was better care for poor people, their basic needs were covered. Now the price is higher but democracy is worth it.” (External)*

Respondents seek the equality and stability that comes with democracy and an increasingly distant dictatorship puts this closer on the horizon. A participant said: *“We have to struggle more to get our rights.”*

## **Seemingly Insurmountable Corruption Worries Women**

Respondents emphasize economic struggles, corruption, male dominant culture and natural disasters as key hurdles to democracy building. For some, Indonesia’s natural landscape – earthquakes, hurricanes and disasters that are frequent and uncontrollable – serve as a metaphor for what sometimes feels like powerlessness to battle the force of the country’s seemingly insurmountable corruption.

According to most respondents, corruption continues to infiltrate and even define Indonesian culture. Corruption is integral to Indonesia’s institutions and communication mechanisms – something that may or may not prove to be a significant political hurdle. Respondents said:

*“Indonesia is slowly advancing to rid itself of corruption, [which] I think is [the] biggest single obstacle to really moving [our development] forward very quickly... This is not a country without money, yet there is a lot of poverty because money disappears. Almost everyone here in Indonesia is complicit in corruption because they can’t do anything, they are not good or bad people... the former ambassador said ‘the only transparent thing in Indonesia is corruption’... Today there is more decentralization, more opportunities for rent-seeking and finding ways to obtain money through corrupt practices, such as real estate or motor vehicle licensing, any place [you] have to see an official and get a permit for anything... It can be overcome, but corruption is insidious, and stronger than integrity systems in place. They don’t see it as extortion but as facilitation fees.” (Staff)*

*“I pity my country. I love it but I don’t know what to do to help it. It is a rich country but the political condition makes the situation bad for people in the country because of greed, and people want to get rich in a short time in the easiest way. Corruption and poverty are becoming the hardest things to solve.” (Participant)*

*“Democracy is only in politics, but not in other areas. People need time to understand the meaning of democracy. It’s a process. At the end we want to improve people’s welfare, and the current condition is not good. There is still so much corruption in general, pollution, bribes and no moral ethics, both in society and in politics.” (Participant)*

Interestingly, many respondents say the corruption that is inherent throughout Indonesia is not characteristic of its women. To the contrary, women are seen to embody honesty and a sense of commitment and generosity, something which many say gives them a tremendous political advantage when reaching out to civil society. An NDI staff person said: *“There is a perception that women are less corrupt, not everywhere and not always, but it is sometimes a slight advantage”*, while an external respondent said:

*“Women have been through a lot, more than men, and this makes women better leaders than men. [They have] a deep commitment, [they are] not just passing by... There is still a phobia of women in Indonesia. [Women need to reach out to others] so they get to know women...for example, academics, rural women, urban women, petite trader women. They will see you’re just like them, the same, but [that women] want more justice, and will take action towards it. Women are more reliable. Let people know that. Women are...more compassionate...and don’t break promises.”*

Despite the discouragement that comes with cultural resistance, evidenced in part by pervasive corruption, enthusiasm remains strong among respondents, who are determined to help democracy succeed and engage women as a core part of that process.

## Political Parties Slow to Change, Women Feel like Pawns

Indonesia’s political parties are slowly integrating women. A male-dominant mentality presents challenges for women to advance among many parties. However, initial evidence suggests an emerging respect and acceptance of women’s leadership capabilities.

Indonesian respondents lament that too many political parties reflect factionalized and self-interested platforms and leaders, making women’s progress – and even democracy itself – a very slow process. Respondents indicated that a lack of real power among women in politics makes them more like “*pawns*” to their male counterparts; many women feel marginalized within political parties. In civil society, many respondents described the tendency for women to be courted by political parties during election time, only to be ignored subsequently. Participants asserted:

*“There are too many political parties. So many people want to establish political parties but just for their own political interests. [They only work] for certain groups of people, for example, themselves, and not for the noble causes, not for the people of the country; only for themselves, to get power. Political parties use power for own interest, especially for material needs.”*<sup>5</sup> (External)

*“[The parties are too] crowded, there are too many. There are 57 parties for 2009; before there were 48. Competition is difficult for women because there is so much competition...A political party law just passed a few days ago, requiring a 30 percent quota of women in office. Before, women couldn’t join with parties, and it was not mandatory. Now it is a must for women to be in the structure of leadership. To establish a new party you have to have this; it is not required for the older parties.”* (External)

*“Parties are recruiting women for the general elections, just near the campaign period. Some women, informal leaders, are actually running for office this cycle, but they are perceived by the parties as pawns or as ‘vote getters’ for the party, rather than people who will add value or have any voice in the party. Many women are not aware of this hidden agenda and are proud to have been recruited.”* (Participant)

*“There are too few women in high positions, but there are steadily more with the leadership and skills to participate and laws are reflecting this positively. Women have a political voice, in particular, through organizations like KPPI [the Women’s Political Caucus of Indonesia] and structures within parties like women’s departments and wings. There are key women leaders in parties and parliaments, but women are still not taken seriously.”* (Staff)

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<sup>5</sup> The Law on General Elections went into effect in 2004. Under the new law, all parties must newly register with the Ministry of Justice and meet enhanced requirements to demonstrate serious organizational scope. The laws established higher standards for political parties to participate in general elections, including meeting regulations regarding minimum number of elected seats held, permanent offices in a minimum numbers of provinces and cities, and minimum numbers of registered members.

Political party elitism and male dominance not only make women's entry into politics difficult, but these factors also contribute to a divide in knowledge, ideology and relationship between leaders and constituents. Building a substantial knowledge base, according to most respondents, is critical. Women face great challenges in a social and political culture that is not receptive to them. Respondents said:

*“Today, [the status] of women in politics in Indonesia is not so good; too few women are in parliament, especially women who perform well, as the public would expect [of women]. [Women have a] lack of knowledge, a lack of preparation, and also, their party doesn't put them in the right place.”* (External)

*“After three years of having Yudhoyono as our president, we think that the paradigm of the politicians is still the same [as] before; they don't really engage citizens. Most of the policies are distant from people's lives. Sometimes new policies are good; however, the politicians are not successful in helping the public understand why the policies are good for them. This has created a big gap between the people and the government, both at the legislative and executive levels.”* (Staff)

*“Training on gender is important... it is important that it also involves males because they need to understand about the quota and women's rights. The quota is good but this needs to be fulfilled with quality women. If we don't have quality women, we could end up with business women or others who don't have political backgrounds.”* (Participant)

Overall, there are mixed views about women's political presence in Indonesia. Most respondents described a political landscape where women's voices are present, however, reception is weak. Some said their voice is strong, while others said a male-dominated climate still silences women; lack of decision-making power once women attain political positions makes it difficult for them to gain respect as political peers. As a result, many respondents believe that women's political voices are increasing, but they continue to lack real power.

## Financial Resources Key to Women's Political Viability

A lack of financial means is cited as a key barrier for women seeking political leadership roles. While respondents stress the invaluable social, political and cultural gains attached to women entering the political realm, it also costs them. A participant said:

*“Women have a voice but not full power. [To make that happen] we must have a lot of money and a good team networking, full of strong women to make voices louder. [Strength entails the ability to] motivate each other. Because the culture of Indonesia is patriarchal and religious also; men are the leaders. Women struggle.”*

Women's financial disadvantage is evidenced in very practical ways within the political sphere. For example, anyone with political aspirations is required to raise – or already have – their own financial resources to compete or engage in a political position. As described by an NDI staff person, women are largely homemakers and lack the financial resources necessary to help them step into political life.

Evidence suggests a direct correlation between access to finance and political advancement. A participant related an example of the effect of money on political success for women at the regional level:

*“In Sulawesi, two of the seven regions are led by women... The reason why these women are in those two positions is because they are friendly, but also because they spent their own money to get seats.”*

Even when a woman has some level of financial strength, she is often impeded by her socially subordinate role that may result in her husband's refusal to support his wife's political aspirations. An external respondent said:

*“Women get involved and then leave because it costs money to be in politics. Women need to work and men are able to stay active in the party because he already has a job and sometimes if the woman is married, she needs permission from the man. Men don't need permission.”*

Here, the participant offers a clear example of the correlation between political and financial power – two areas in which Indonesia’s women historically have lacked resources.

A lack of financial awareness among women also stereotypes the political roles assigned to them. Few women, if any, are assigned to budget management or other roles considered traditionally male. Several respondents said this division perpetuates perceptions that women are less equipped to deal with “hard” political issues, and in turn, fuels gender inequality. Ironically, Indonesian women tend to manage their households’ budgets. An external respondent affirmed: *“Women know how to manage the budget. They do it in their own households and know priorities, better than men.”*

Access to funding further emphasizes the gender divide, as lack of money hinders women’s political progress. In response to this disadvantage, some respondents imply the need for creativity among Indonesia’s women in accessing resources. For most respondents, women can only truly achieve political power by participating in their own progress – politically, financially and attitudinally. This starts with social networking among women, which many respondents emphasize as a critical means for raising money. Women must work together and build a strategy that consists of reciprocal support.

## Realization of Networking and Quota Key to Long-Term Change

A seemingly natural networking ability is among Indonesian women’s greatest strengths. For example, various respondents described “money pooling” clubs that women create in order to build their financial base. An NDI staff person described this:

*“There is a process called Arisan’ in which every week, a group of women puts money into a pot, it’s like a lottery but everyone wins at some point. It’s not specifically to run for office, [but can be used for that]. Typically women do it so they can meet a lot of people...Also, women get together to read the Koran every week. It’s all networking – political parties use it to network, to get supporters.”*

Increasing political power also requires higher placement on the national list. Quotas must be accompanied by strategic list placement requirements. Respondents described a contemporary model that may proportionally require women’s representation, but with low ranking or bottom-tier placement, women’s presence is essentially meaningless. Respondents said:

*“[This] proportional system is very bad because the political party decides who is on the candidate list, and women are placed lower on the list. Men are listed one to five, maybe women six to ten. The quota system doesn’t affect where women land on the list...political parties decide themselves who will be ranked and where. But resistance is high from political parties.”* (Participant)

*“[Women will advance] first through a quota law in political party laws, and second, through networking. Make sure that not only is the quota in law, but that implementation is actually happening inside the political parties. For instance, with women candidates, our big issue is the candidate list for election. We need people to monitor it, because there may be women listed second one day and listed fifth the next. We have to monitor the list.”* (External)

*“It used to be women only in women’s departments or women’s wings. Today, [it is] realized that, in order to be elected, [there need to be women] in higher numbers, higher listed on candidate list. Need to be spread in different departments and areas. Women [have to be] on candidate lists.”* (Staff)

Several respondents also stressed the exclusion of women from religious leadership positions as a significant barrier to public support of women in political leadership roles. Not surprisingly, some believe that if women are not taken seriously in religious leadership, this will most likely infiltrate public perceptions around their viability

as political leaders. An interesting exception to this general thought emerged when a participant talked of using her religious leadership role as leverage that gave her the freedom to engage in political party work on her own terms. She said:

*“I’m a leader of a faith-based organization with 15 million members, Muslim. [There,] I’m a leader already, and I used this to leverage a position of power in my party. I told my party that I wanted a significant position in the party, because I was already holding a key position in the Muslim organization, or I would be happy with just maintaining my leadership position in religious social organization and wouldn’t be active in the party.”*

The gains that come with the capacity to network are bolstered by existing resources found in organizations such as NDI. In fact, NDI is singled out as another primary networking agent. Through its diverse range of programs, NDI is described as a key resource for Indonesian women as they slowly integrate themselves into a male-dominated power structure. As a result of NDI’s help, one staff person said: *“Participants have more self-confidence and are able to build networks with other women party members. Networks are important.”*

## **Attitudinal Shifts Must Bolster Quotas**

Recent quota changes in the form of the 2003 law requiring political parties to *consider* selecting 30 percent women candidates in each electoral district is identified as a significant and necessary step in the right direction to meaningfully increase women’s political leadership and create the real possibility of advancement for women. As one participant said, the quota is a *“stepping stone.”*

Yet most Indonesian respondents express concern that numbers are rendered meaningless without real attitudinal changes that embrace women as leaders. An external respondent captured this sentiment: *“Women are only used as objects, especially with quota now; they are not in decision-making position.”* Attitudinal shifts alongside increased placement of women in political power roles are required for women’s continued political progress.

Real political power for women will only come with meaningful representation. Respondents described two components as part of this process: mandating and enforcing a quota, and getting women into positions of real power within the political structure. Participants want both. Requiring the political inclusion of women through quotas is a key start for creating a space for women to move into power. For many respondents, this means demanding better list placement for women which is not currently included in the law. Electoral reform is necessary for women to truly evolve in rank and influence and it must be bolstered by substantive change. This includes advancement of women to positions of power, alongside an attitudinal shift that inspires men and women to embrace women as political leaders. Real change, according to most respondents, only comes with sustainable, systemic change.

Today, women are seen in political parties, but they rank far below their male counterparts, and as a result, are not taken seriously. Respondents said:

*“There needs to be a regulation or law that protects the right for women to be in decision-making positions. That can be a quota, not only in national law, but also in the party bylaw itself; there should be a regulation to include women. In [one political party], for example, there was no party quota; the bylaws said they ‘should pay attention’ [to women in office]. It was informal. It didn’t work.”* (External)

*“Now, 30 percent of candidates should be women. We are still fighting in the election law system. We proposed a system for women...[but] most parties put women very low on the list. Now we have proposed putting women with men, or alternating men-women-men-women. The ideal proposal is [for] every three candidates or every four candidates, there must be one woman.”* (External)



*“There needs to be a 30 percent obligation rather than a target. But most parties don’t want this, parties refused [it]. Parties don’t want intervention...through laws or other external mechanisms. The public is also not supportive of a quota for women in parliament.” (Participant)*

*“The 30 percent quota is not enough because it is not obligatory yet; we have to make it a law, and punish parties without a 30 percent...Also, we have a caucus [of women politicians] but it doesn’t work at a maximum rate... Women’s NGOs and political parties are not receptive to changes that empower women, such as getting domestic workers protected, housekeepers who are undocumented.” (Participant)*

In addition to internal political party resistance, some said a lack of public understanding, and hence support, makes the effective implementation of a formal quota challenging. A lack of civic education, coupled with entrenched traditional gender roles, fosters perceptions of women as less capable than their male counterparts. Some respondents also said that regional perceptions of politics as “dirty” often make it seem inappropriate for women to engage at all. Some participants shared:

*“We need to improve the political parties and create internal reforms including affirmative action within the party for women, address criteria of candidates, etc. We also need to educate the public, the grassroots, because they don’t understand their political rights and the meaning of participation.”*

*“People outside of the parties don’t understand that the decisions to support women need to come from the good will of the leaders and can’t be pushed from outside of party...Even if a law is enacted requiring the parties to create opportunities for women, the parties still need to be lobbied...It will all be different if we can change their perspective and open their mind.”*

*“I’m proud of women right now. Following the news year by year, it is getting better. Women’s awareness has increased. In 1992, we had eight to nine percent women in parliament and now it is 12 percent. This is also because of the new regulation [quota target] for women [on party lists].”*

*“Women have a different starting point to get into politics. They have a lack of skills and education, and we need to increase women’s awareness. [In Indonesia we] have a stigma that politics is dirty, thus women are leaving politics for this reason. We need them to understand that they need to fight together with the community and be involved in politics (on the inside) in order to affect change and make people’s lives better.”*

An external respondent mirrored the views of participants when she said:

*“Women should have an important role because they are more than half of the population. But the fact is that women members in legislature [are] only 11 percent; and in lower level municipalities, some have no women legislators. The problem is that women in legislative and executive positions think politics is dirty, and only for men; they prefer to be in other areas outside of politics, like a teacher, a doctor and housewife.”*

Interestingly, while hope permeates participant perspectives, respondents, particularly NDI staff (not of Indonesian origin), express even greater optimism about democratic progress and the strides that lie ahead for Indonesia’s women:

*“This country is a hopeful place where there’s been enormous achievements in a short time because in only two rounds of elections that have been free and fair, we have seen vast changes in behavior in parliament and a clear engagement of voters directing political parties to change their behavior; and a civil society that is better positioned to hold politicians accountable.” (Staff)*

*“More democracy means more political parties, and freedom of expression. It used to be political parties were ‘untouchable,’ and a person could only join if they were close to the government, during the new order. Now, there is diversity, more accessibility...for men, ordinary men, and women...Before we only elected ‘wife of X’ or ‘daughter of*

*X.’ Now women have become famous for reform activity. Also, discussion among women increased around wanting more political party positions. In NGOs and political parties, women worked together to create the 2003 [quota] law; now it is required that 30 percent women be in the political party structure.” (Staff)*

*“Women have a voice in politics. Even if just lip service, at least women in politics have become a big part of the conversation, i.e. ‘women are 50 percent of the population’ and pieces of conversation like that. And with the election, political party leaders want someone who can get more votes; they don’t care if it is a woman or man... Strong women can get more votes than male candidates.” (Staff)*

*“Women themselves have to be brave, have courage to take positions as decision-makers... If more women [are] in party leadership positions, then it will work. Political party laws just passed will work on this quota, and will ask parties to apply.” (External)*

Differences between staff perspectives compared to external and participant respondents may involve different historical reference points. Some NDI staff, particularly those in leadership positions, have witnessed democratic progress in other countries, and have a different set of historical references and a different view of what may constitute progress. Still, cultivating unity, courage and confidence among Indonesian women is of great interest to all respondents who believe that the integration and advancement of women in political parties will not only increase their political power and equity, but also improve overall citizen welfare.

## **Rural Areas Bring Challenge and Potential**

While Indonesia is witnessing the gradual ascension of women into political office, a short democratic history, a population of 220 million people, over 30 ethnic groups, and more autonomous and hard to reach provincial areas (also referred to as rural and regional areas) makes democracy feel like a more distant accomplishment. In fact, many participants describe a climate of growing unrest among provinces seeking political independence.

Respondents describe gender inequality, and even misogyny, throughout some of Indonesia’s rural areas. A lack of basic social services reflects the inadequate distribution of resources, and women’s needs are far from a priority. An external respondent said:

*“Local government must have five percent budget allocated specifically for women’s issues – but usually provinces don’t reach five percent, sometimes one percent, sometimes zero. Reproductive health [problems] and the mortality rate are increasing among women because local areas do not have good services, health services. Government clinics are not good, and there is trafficking of women and children. Domestic violence is high, and gender based violence is also high. Local regulations discriminate against women.”*

Indonesian respondents said lagging integration of democratic principles in these areas is attributable in large part to decentralization. Rural autonomy among thousands of provinces, all with individual agendas, makes these constituents the hardest to reach for political leaders. In addition to decentralization, many respondents attribute the slow pace of democratization in these areas to other key factors including:

- Poverty and economic hardship;
- Lack of education and high rates of illiteracy;
- Rising Islamic fundamentalism; and
- Cultural and legal resistance to women’s rights and leadership.

While urban areas are not immune to gender inequality, most participants consider the patriarchal mentality found in urban politics pale in comparison to the restrictive and repressive climate for women in many rural areas. A lack of women’s political leadership in rural areas manifests in a variety of ways. For example, an NDI staff

person discussed the absence of women politicians in provincial or local leadership positions, or “lower level” positions, while an external respondent stressed the failure to implement international laws that may help advance women.

*“The percentage of women in office is still small and it gets alarmingly lower statistically as you look at the lower levels of government – the reverse of North America. Representation of women at the city level is around one percent dissimilar to other parts of the world. The discourse for women in politics primarily exists at the national level. The challenge is to continue this push for women beyond just the national level and institutionalize it through having men and women changing the party law, election law and internal party bylaws.”* (Staff)

*“The atmosphere is very masculine still. Local regulations [are still supported, and] based in Islam. Women are the object of local regulations. When the women’s movement tries to protest to the Supreme Court – which is also very masculine – it [responds by saying] it’s not against the law, what the provinces are doing. [The problem is that] Indonesia ratified the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, with the United Nations, it is Law #7, in 1984. But it has not been implemented. Government doesn’t recognize that they have a law...Political parties need to be pro-gender, sensitive to women’s needs...Right now there are only 1 to 10 percent of women in that structure in decision-making roles. [That’s too] limited.”* (External)

*“I don’t think women really have a voice. Right now, women comprise 51 percent of the electoral vote, and men 49 percent. But representation of women is only seven percent. That’s the problem, nationally. If you look at the provinces, parliament at that level and district level even lower. In rural areas, sometimes there are no women.”* (External)

While rural areas may present great obstacles to the advancement of women, these areas also pose great possibility for change. Several respondents said fostering specific avenues to reach rural leaders will actually help spread social and cultural change throughout rural, more conservative areas. For example, the implementation of a local provincial quota would mean the integration of hundreds of thousands of women as the face of rural politics – and in turn, Indonesia. An NDI staff person said:

*“The size of the country is daunting and the aid money for political development is ever-shrinking. With 32 provinces, there might be millions of women in one province. Party bylaws are really important because they affect internal decisions at every level of the party and given the size of the population, changing the bylaws could have a huge impact on women...Because Indonesian political culture requires national parties to have their structures in at least half of the provinces and a quarter of the districts, in order to participate in elections, by changing bylaws you would require a significant number of women in their structures.”*

As one NDI staff person described, the “sheer number” of people living in Indonesia could mean that party changes at the local levels, province by province – including local quotas – could have a huge, and likely quick, impact on women in politics.

## **Islam: A Spiritual and Cultural Resource**

The impact of religion, and more specifically, Islamist fundamentalism, poses a challenge for respondents as they explore women’s progress in Indonesia. Some are concerned; they described a rising fundamentalist movement, particularly within the provinces, as dangerous. However, some note that Islam can be empowering to women as it is not manipulated to hinder women’s rights.

Several respondents estimated that rising religious fundamentalism – not only that found in the most conservative provinces such as Aceh and Sumatra, but surfacing in other areas as well – is impacting voting laws and possibly the electoral process, posing a real threat to women’s equality and progress. Some external respondents said:

*“Local regulations that discriminate against women are found in [Islamic] fundamentalism; religious [factions are still] strong in Indonesia. Autonomy and decentralization...make local government have more authority on local regulations and legislation. [This does not have a] good impact for women because [we] have 60 local regulations that discriminate against women. For example, [having] to wear head scarves. Not in Jakarta but in other provinces... there are local regulations on prostitution and homosexuality. Police go around at night and pick up women they suspect are prostitutes, arrest her, and give her a fine, lecture regarding morality and ethics.”*

*“Islam is now becoming stronger, and decentralization policy is negative for women because regions want identity, and use religion to help create identity with religion. This means forgetting women, and creating regional bylaws that are inspired by Islam. It is really threatening us...but 76 percent of those nationally are secular and do not want an Islamic state.”*

*“There’s a social terrorism, when majority group pressures and marginalizes minority groups. This applies to women’s issues, sexual orientation, religious minorities like local religions. [It makes things] insecure. Like the attack yesterday on a more secular Muslim group. [So things are] good, but we also need to strengthen civil society more. There is an urgent need.”*

Fear that an upsurge in religious fundamentalism will cause significant setbacks to the advances already witnessed makes some respondents question the real possibility of democratic progress, especially as it involves women. An external respondent said:

*“[In ten years from now], if we are not able to handle the rising fundamentalist attitude things will be bleak. They will be able to change the constitution, the Islamic groups, and I couldn’t come here without a veil, for instance. I may not even [be able to] move around without my husband...I don’t underestimate [the possibility]. Look at history – what happened in Sudan. Algeria. Last month, in the governor’s election in Jakarta, the fundamentalist party came very close to winning”*

To manage this, many respondents emphasized that all those involved in promoting democracy – political parties, MPs, international NGOs and civil society organizations – need to build resources and coalitions. Creating strong partnerships with civil society organizations and conducting outreach and education in provincial areas, particularly by working closely with religious leaders, is essential. An external respondent said:

*“Approach religious leaders. Engage them, because if there is any hesitation, it comes from them. People listen to them,”* and *“Continuing to work with the religious parties is also a strategy because although the range of perceptions about women’s rights varies in the religious parties, they are the ones most likely to roll back women’s rights.”*

At the same time, some respondents stressed that within Indonesia Islam itself is not a core threat for democratically-minded Indonesians; instead, it is the manipulation of Islam as a means to oppress women that warrants apprehension. Many participants felt empowered by Islamic teachings. They said:

*“Islam doesn’t forbid women from getting what they want, but it reminds them to remember their dignity. From the cultural side, people are not used to seeing women in a high position. I have to work as a political party member, for example, but people tell me that I’m too busy and this is implying that I will forget my dignity. I just let them have their opinion, and I just go ahead and do my thing. For example, I am a wife and a mother, and I still do activities as a woman, and my husband doesn’t forbid me from doing what I want. [But the] general paradigm is that professional women will forget dignity.”*

*“Indonesia is going in the right direction, but the country is still struggling, particularly on its legislative processes. Women and marginal groups need a voice in the legislature and women’s issues need to be addressed... From a women’s perspective, the state of the country is still unsatisfactory because of culture. Men are still in control and keep women from participating in an equal way even though Muslim values don’t teach this. Muslim values talk about democracy.”*

A staff person said:

*“The issues of Islam are not an obstacle, and we should be profiling Indonesian women as much as possible in the Muslim world...[Indonesians] are from a trade culture and then four religions converged on top of one another including the practice of Islam which is open, reflective and not an exclusionary type. It is about living together, [and as leaders it is important] to bring women further along through Islam, to be community centered. Women in Muslim parties are the most articulate.”*

In one case, an NDI staff person pointed to Indonesia as an example of Muslim ideology and women’s success: *“Indonesia has a depth and breadth to it that is good and the discussion of Muslim women’s leadership is better than in most of the Middle East.”*

Both strength and challenge are found in the same source; how women engage in the movement will help determine the outcome.

## **NDI Emerges as Vital Resource for Women**

NDI is singled out as a key resource for Indonesian women. By creating previously non-existent avenues for politically-minded women to network, build skills, and learn how to better express themselves, NDI is both a political and personal friend.

Respondents describe a gradual integration of these new ideas and platforms into the broader cultural landscape, one that ultimately contributes to social attitude shifts and a building of individual self-esteem. NDI’s programs are not only a good starting point for women; concrete guidance and materials help make them a strong foundational force. Respondents said:

*“Women are satisfied with NDI’s programs for women because we are one of the only institutions working with women in parties. NDI can fulfill their needs on training. The materials that we provide is relatively new for them; it is interesting that NDI can manage training on speaking etc. Examples and tools are things that make it easier for women to understand.”* (Staff)

*“NDI gave [us a] big spirit, and opened our minds. I used NDI’s information [and materials, what I have learned from NDI] in my own campaign.”* (Participant)

*“Because of the training...I got many materials to use in the province for male and female candidates running for office...but especially for new women members. I created the agenda for all of the trainings for which I used the NDI materials; the training gave me much more knowledge and material to pass on.”* (Participant)

Trainings emerge as highly popular among respondents. Women feel empowered by participating in NDI trainings and workshops. NDI’s widespread credibility serves the women who engage in its programs, and there is a sense that the capacity development that comes from such participation, coupled with NDI’s solid reputation, enhances their credibility among their male peers. Many say they experience a palpable shift in peer respect after returning from NDI training or other programs, particularly when they display their certificates of completion. Participants said:

*“NDI has sent people from parties abroad and when they return they get more attention from leaders.”*

*“After training from NDI, our party participants at the regional level would often think they should adjust their training at the national level. It is important for NDI to discuss with the party at the national level what we are training on at the regional level, so they’re in sync.”*

*“When I was expert staff for a faction in parliament, I was not listened to by the members. However, after I become a part of NDI’s programs and articulated myself, they did [listen to me].”*

*“After a [training of trainers] in Jakarta with 40 participants from Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, and other countries, I learned about campaigning and fundraising and we signed [NDI’s Win with Women] Global Action Plan. To support our agreement to the Global Action Plan, I trained women in three provinces. I received \$600 from NDI to develop and conduct trainings in the regions, which has had a snowballing effect. Women I trained have trained others; however, how and whether the trainings happen depends on the leadership of the party branches.”*

*“[NDI provided very] good opportunities to upgrade my knowledge, to build a network. Sometimes when NDI comes to my party, it raises my profile in the party. The president of the party called me after NDI came to the party.”*

NDI staff share participant perceptions, captured by one staff person:

*“Parties...think highly of our certificates, they are an additional ‘score’ for political parties. This is very important, not only for candidates but political parties – both think highly of NDI.”*

Information sharing helps aspiring women acquire ideas and material as they engage with men and women in political dialogue and networking. One participant said: *“At NDI’s [Win with Women] Global Forum in DC, I got many ideas.”* Similarly, the adoption of NDI teachings, materials and strategies are of tremendous service to women entering the political arena.

NDI has achieved great success among those who know the organization, and many respondents said positive hands-on experience, coupled with time, are the primary ingredients for trust-building. This is particularly true given NDI’s American identity, which initially stirs some suspicion among Indonesians. As democracy unfolds, respondents described a process which reveals that trust is cultivated the more people work with NDI. NDI’s generosity, marked by *“not asking for anything back,”* as one participant said, further bolsters its credibility. A participant said:

*“NDI provides assistance to many parties. The difference between NDI and other NGOs is that it has established good relationships and communication with the parties and has helped them analyze the core problems they need to address within the party. NDI works collaboratively with the parties for a tailored approach to each and does not try to use a cookie cutter approach which would be rejected by the parties. Our parties have their own culture and you can’t generalize them as the same. NDI works to align its goals with those of the parties’ desires for change to create an individual program, making it easy for the parties to work with NDI.”*

Enhancing skills, which quickly and in a long-term way builds women’s self-esteem and knowledge base, emerges as NDI’s greatest strength. For example, respondents, both men and women, said that public speaking is critical in building credibility and an attentive audience. Participants said:

*“Leaders need to articulate their positions as [well] as possible. Speaking in public is one of the most important things for leaders because it humiliates people when they don’t perform well in public. Think as a leader. [Learn] how to use public speaking to motivate people and to mobilize people. I see so many leaders speaking that are saying nothing.”*

*“Public speaking [is important]. Women keep silent, and men let them. Our culture makes women silent and most Indonesian men like them like that. It is very useful to speak in party meetings and use convincing words, talk to the media, and talk in campaigns.”*

For women who have historically have been silenced, the ability to engage in effective public speaking is a prerequisite for their success. People, both men and women, are not used to listening to women in public settings; women must therefore be equipped with practical skills and confidence. Several respondents identified

parliament and other political venues, in addition to the media, as key places for men to hear women and for women to gain political ground. Women need to speak for themselves before anyone else, especially men, are willing to take the lead. Respondents said:

*“Sometimes when gender issues come up there is no woman in the room because they have other meetings. We need for women to do more than to speak loudly to ask the minister something; we need to be there to influence and discussion. Male members of the faction don’t want to discuss gender and the tradition is that only women must talk about women’s issues. Men say to women, ‘Look, women are quiet. If you don’t want to struggle for your rights, we are not going to struggle for you.’” (Participant)*

*“We need to approach the leadership of parties to convince them of the importance of women in parties. It would be good if women in parties could have the opportunity to speak or to be a resource person. Sometimes I don’t want to go to the meeting because only men get to speak.” (Participant)*

*“Improve the quality of women in decision-making positions, like legislators. Activists fought for them in 1999 and in 2004, so they expect them to be better. Women in power need to be smart, and informed...[They are] not yet. [For example, there are] three MPs in one of the parties. Only one of them who is vocal is good – she was involved and active in women’s issues before she was elected. The other women were not really active, and that’s why they are more quiet in parliament. The one who is good mingles and interacts with women and men in other parties, she has a good network with other women activists, and is always available to voice needs of women’s issues.” (External)*

NDI is revealed not only as a trusted resource for Indonesians, it also serves as a credential for candidates – women and men alike.

## **KPPI Historically Helpful, Currently Fragmented**

The 2000 launch of the Women’s Political Caucus of Indonesia (*Kaukus Perempuan Politik Indonesia*, KPPI) was a marker of great change and hopeful strides for politically-interested women. KPPI started as a network of women from NGOs, political parties and businesswomen. KPPI has served as a key political resource for Indonesian women. Participants said:

*“Before 1999, women only discussed topics about empowering women, but in 2000 [NDI] actually developed KPPI, and people started thinking about how to actually implement women’s rights into politics. We also had a more systematic collaboration with the women’s movement to advocate for the 30 percent law.”*

*“KPPI gave us good leverage to press the government, lobby to change policy...[and] is doing advocacy on how to put the political empowerment of women into the budget of the ministry of women’s empowerment. KPPI wants to reach women in the whole country.”*

KPPI became known widely outside of Jakarta, which led to regional chapters of the organization in many parts of Indonesia. This stands out to participants who reference the positive impact of NDI’s work with KPPI by extending its reach to as many women as possible:

*“NDI is helping KPPI grow in as many provinces as possible. NDI’s Madeleine K. Albright award gives money to KPPI so [it has been able to] open branches in the provinces. KPPI has branches in 24 of 33 provinces and still has nine branches to open.”*

*“[Women have] more confidence as a result of NDI program participation, [which] teaches women in remote areas, in areas lower than provinces, so there are the following tiers: national, provinces, cities and municipalities... KPPI is in 24 provinces and 165 municipalities and cities.”*

Recently, respondents say that KPPI has lost some ground. Today, there are mixed feelings about its effectiveness. Participants said:

*“[In addition to trainings for women in political parties], NDI’s greatest contribution to women in Indonesia thus far is KPPI [even though now] it isn’t going well.”*

*“[A] skill that KPPI needs from NDI is how to do effective and systematic lobbying to political parties; a law exists, but [we need to learn] how to disseminate it to parties and how to lobby in a systemic way. [We should create a] lobby starting now to get women on lists and nominated in 2009, regardless of what happens with the electoral law.”*

Some participants are hopeful that the future will help resolve KPPI’s contemporary fragmentation. A participant said: *“[I have] hope in 2009 KPPI will have a better understanding how to change the mindset of parties and get NDI’s help making good recommendations to parties.”*

Some staff encouraged KPPI to partner with existing women’s resources in Indonesia and take a lead role in women’s political strides, while others said it is important not to rely solely on KPPI for women’s political advances, particularly given perceptions of its recent ineffectiveness spurred by internal problems. Staff said:

*“There are parallel institutions called wives’ clubs that could also be creative to galvanize women because they have budgets. KPPI and the wives clubs could engage in activities together. Their budget is from the state government.”*

*“If KPPI moved to a membership-oriented culture, because of the sheer number of women that are running (tens of thousands, many of whom won’t win but want to continue to be involved in politics), they could become and fund the institution. It would provide a platform to link all of the women up when they are frustrated with civil society or with the parties. If they are the first women to get elected at the sub-district level, they are going to need support, and the drawing together could only happen through a cross party forum.”*

*“Women are asking for more women’s programs. We only work with KPPI; [it would be] better if we have more money so we can reach other partners that are also important in political parties, the wings, to involve more women. Not only KPPI. More money means more stakeholders to expand development and integration of women. So I think if you ask an Indonesian, ‘Who is NDI?’ they’ll say, ‘KPPI.’ It would be better if we had more partners...Don’t make KPPI special...[As far as the impact on women in politics, it would] probably increase their role in politics.”*

In 2001, women in the Indonesian Parliament formed another organization, also called KPPI, comprised exclusively of women parliamentarians. KPPI-Parliament is largely driven by MPs who are striving to pass legislation. KPPI-Parliament struggles with balancing party loyalty and working toward the common good, a tension which ultimately stymies the group. Participants reported:

*“KPPI [civil society]...is different because it has activists from all of the parties. I had hoped that KPPI-Parliament would be the same with the women in parliament. In the parliament, the configuration of the parties in parliament is used in the configuration of KPPI with regard to the leadership, proportionally mirroring who their seats in parliament has power in parliament. Some of the women in the leadership are not gender sensitive and this is not good for the organization. I hope that the women will become more active and be more creative. The senior women have a leadership problem and this is why we seldom hear about KPPI-Parliament.”*

*“Sometimes the system can be barrier for us. KPPI-Parliament is an example. The young women want to make [new] programs, but the senior leadership is prohibiting us. We’re 65 women in parliament so we could work on the parliament together. One or two women influence the budget but that’s not enough, and the budget is too big for this. Women need to work together. Budget knowledge is key.”*

An NDI staff member notes that the two coalitions of women – KPPI (civil society) and KPPI-Parliament must reinforce one another and that an investment in one should be accompanied by an investment in the other:



*“[For NDI to make KPPI a priority], funding around the parliamentary caucus must be generated. We also [need to tell the] KPPI story in a more compelling way [than] we might have, in part due to the fact that they are not doing well at the moment.”*

Openness to reshaping KPPI presents an opportunity for the birth of new partnerships and advocacy efforts, particularly in rural areas. Many respondents feel this process could be facilitated if NDI were to re-insert itself in dialogues and financial resource building.

## **Conclusion**

The greatest social, cultural and political changes in Indonesia, according to most respondents, have been inspired by collaboration among women, across political parties, within and across organizations, and cross-regionally. A participant said:

*“We need agreement among people on the priorities for the country and the steps we will take to achieve our goals. We need to be a more wealthy country, more sensitive to people’s problems and able to prioritize the community needs. We believe that people can express themselves if we take more responsibility to build the country together; this is the first step and we will be proud eventually.”*

NDI has played a significant role in helping to cultivate change. Still, the integration of democracy, particularly in a country the size of Indonesia, requires time and fortitude – qualities respondents say are found among Indonesia’s women.

## NDI Program History

Since opening its office in 1997, NDI has provided technical assistance to political party and civil society activists working for democratic change in Serbia. Since the fall of the Milosevic regime, the Institute has been working with MPs and political party leaders to assist Serbia in continuing their efforts to realize internal reforms and bolster their institutions' capacities, engage ethnic and regional parties in the nation's political discourse, and promote the participation of women and youth in its governing institutions.

Throughout these years of programming, NDI has placed a special emphasis on women's inclusion as a vital constituency in any democracy, not only as voters but also as activists and public officials. NDI training programs have given politically active women the confidence and skills to run for office, wage advocacy and electoral campaigns, and maximize their effectiveness in parliament through a women MPs' network. As a vital component of NDI's efforts in Serbia, the Institute also works with municipal Gender Equality Commissions to promote the political participation of women in Serbia and works with women activists in civil society and in parliament to continue building support for passage of the Law on Gender Equality. In addition to providing guidance and consultation on these campaigns, NDI has also provided technical assistance to the commissions on fundraising techniques to support the projects. Other notable women's political participation activities include skills building seminars which NDI conducts as part of its assistance to women's branches and networks of parties.

Funding for the NDI Serbia office since 1997 has been \$34,724,732.00.

## Background

Tito's long-standing communist rule gave way to the rise of Milosevic's reign in 1987, a year that witnessed the dissolution of national borders and ushered in a particularly tumultuous period in Serbia's history. This period brought the Bosnian war between 1992 and 1995, and Montenegro's acquisition of full independence in 2006. In February 2008, Kosovo's independence from Serbia – recognized by members of the international community, but not by Serbians – took center stage, and today continues to be a central issue in Serbia's democratically-oriented path.

At the time of the interview process, Serbia was straddling two different directions. Close tallies between Serbia's Radical Party and Democratic Party in the January 2008 presidential elections required a February 3 runoff election. As this run-off election was scheduled for only weeks after the interviews took place, this created a different and apprehensive tone during the interview process than may have existed following the run-off. At the same time, respondents were descriptive and consistent as to how each outcome would play out for Serbia's future: a Radical Party win would carry a pro-Russia alliance and a distant relationship with the European Union (EU); a Democratic Party win would bring just the opposite, including closer Western ties. While Serbia-U.S. relations are generally positive, they are strained over U.S. recognition of Kosovo's independence.

The Radical candidate carried a slightly higher margin in the first round presidential election, stirring concern among respondents, who felt gender equality issues came second to what citizens may consider to be more basic needs, such as economic well-being, and politically volatile issues, such as Serbia's relationship with Kosovo. In turn, most were hopeful the runoff would inspire a more democratic-leaning constituency, and perhaps younger, more European-leaning Serbs to vote alongside nationalists who *"always show up to vote."* While differences certainly exist between urban and rural and more and less formally educated youth, one participant believed: *"The younger generation is less willing to wave the national flag."*

After the interview process, President Tadic, the Democratic Party leader, won the runoff by a small margin. Divided political views surrounding the separation of Kosovo, and what that symbolizes for Serbia in terms of an East versus West direction, sparked riots in February 2008, shortly after the run-off election. In March 2008, the government fell and snap parliamentary elections were held in May 2008, when democratic reformers won in numbers much as they did in the presidential election.

The tremendous uncertainty in Serbia at the time of the interviews meant issues of gender equality and women's political participation often seemed eclipsed by day-to-day needs, particularly economic security and freedom.

A total of 22 interviews were conducted in Serbia<sup>6</sup> from January 20 to 22, 2008. Interviews were conducted with four NDI staff members, 17 NDI program participants and one external respondent. Shortly after the Women's Political Party Programming Assessment was completed in Serbia, citizens in that country were exposed to a period of post-election tension over the independence of Kosovo.

## Democratic Change Inspires Hope and Ambivalence

Serbia's recent history, marked by a pattern of progress and setbacks, fosters a cautious optimism among respondents. The last ten years brought the end of the Milosevic regime as well as key privatization efforts. Many respondents referenced the significant loss, practically and symbolically, brought by the assassination of former Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic, who brought great promise for democracy. Today, generations of vastly different ideologies – an older generation comfortable with communism alongside a younger generation ready for democracy – live in this circumstance. A participant said: *“One generation came of age with war [in the 1990s], and is disillusioned, while the new generation is more involved.”*

Speculation associated with the pending run-off election affected the interviews, as many respondents feared the resurgence of the Radical Party which may have reinstated traditional gender roles, family laws, a nationalist agenda and alignment with Russia. A participant said: *“I'm very worried about the overall direction of Serbia, which [will have] serious repercussions on the national women's movement and women's issues and women in parties.”*

In addition to concerns over women's rights, some respondents worried over the Radical Party's influence on youth, many of whom have played a critical role in NDI's regional trainings, and the spread of democratic values in Serbia. A participant said: *“I'm afraid of the Radical Party especially because of their effect on youth.”*

Despite fears among respondents, there was some tentative optimism based on the unanticipated high voter turnout in the first round of elections. Many considered that it demonstrated a greater personal investment among Serbs than was suggested by recent political disillusion. Participants said:

*“[Serbia is moving in the] right direction. The best proof is the turnout at the election last night – over 60 percent voted; I only expected 50 percent, which means not just radicals voted. This means that mainstream Serbian citizens do care... I hope it won't be so tight in the second round. [Things are moving in the] right direction but slowly, because the Radicals are so strong. It's been eight years since the Milosevic regime, so slowly we're seeing changes. It's small steps.”* (Staff)

*“[There is a] change in consciousness among people [which can be seen, for example, in the recent] increased voter turnout [among] women. People are also living better economically.”* (Participant)

However, regardless of who wins the run-off election, according to most respondents, work will be required for women to gain equal political footing in Serbia's continually male-dominated culture. A participant said: *“On the surface [things in society] looks equal, but choices [for women] are still restricted. Women are still judged differently, and the country is still patriarchal.”*

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<sup>6</sup> Due to travel schedules, one of the interviews was conducted by telephone on April 4, 2008.

Respondents asserted that fear of change, coupled with some resistance by political parties to the adoption of democratic values, keeps Serbia “bogged down” or “stalled.” The looming run-off election reminded many that all progress is “reversible.”

Like any transitioning culture, several respondents said Serbia needs time to integrate real changes, particularly because of its political uncertainty. Most respondents highlighted the possibility of European Union membership and an overall orientation toward European values more broadly, as a tremendous hope for the future of women in politics. A participant said: “*People have more self-confidence, and they realize they are part of something, [that they] can make change.*”

Women interviewed feel they are close to achieving some aspects of democracy and witnessing the growth of their own personal and political power. A participant said:

*“Things are moving in the right direction, I know so. Look at the figures...the average income [has risen]... There is privatization, free market circumstances, and strong financial institutions... Things have moved very fast in seven years. We still have problems of corruption and a bad judiciary system, you name it, and we have it as a problem. Nevertheless [things have moved forward]... [and we] have a remarkable number of women in ownership of enterprises, small business, and financial circles.”*

Despite a recent history whose post-Communist era stunted economic, political and social progress in the Milosevic years, most respondents still consider today’s Serbia to be politically stable. For many, this is largely evidenced by a notably improved quality of life: people have money to buy basic food supplies; increased work opportunities; and more income for personal travel, though continued sanctions still make it difficult for Serbs to move freely internationally.

In fact, a taste of economic freedom has shifted many Serbs toward a more European political ideology than a Russian one. This has resulted in a change of Serbian demands, expectations, and perceptions of what is possible. A participant said:

*“People are more relaxed. There is market power, and spending power. Now people can buy a full box of food, when ten years ago that was not possible. There is consumer power. A middle class has started to form again, which was lost in the previous period... There is a possibility to have more, and to travel more, because [people now have] money... the country is more open and interested in foreign investment.”*

Additionally, increased media freedom is highly significant as a marker of democracy and recognition of human rights. While Milosevic era corruption is still endemic, the role of the media has increased in Serbia. For women in particular, this means access to information and expression within a society that has historically silenced them. A participant said:

*“Since 2000, there has been a more open [and free] media. It’s not so state dependent as before, because [we are no longer living] under fear – journalists had their lives threatened under Milosevic. Now the media is becoming economically independent.”*

Slow progress in women’s political participation has resulted in divergent responses: some women advocate patience and tentative optimism while others despair of the lack of tangible progress. The potential of the Radical Party winning the run-off election has awakened anxiety in many respondents and many are hesitant to fully embrace hope that women’s voices will become active and powerful.

A staff person said: “*[Things are] progressing, but with many hiccups... [we are trying to get] people engaged in change.*”

Education or lack thereof also presents a challenge to progress. A largely uninformed citizenry, or as one participant stated, “*people [who] are not politically educated,*” hinders social, political and cultural change in Serbia.

Respondents asserted that citizens often vote for a personality rather than for party ideologies or platforms. According to most respondents, Serbian resistance to democracy lies among those who stand to gain more in a traditional, male-dominated political environment where the status quo is unchallenged. These citizens are the least likely to embrace women leaders or take them seriously.

Interestingly, some respondents say a hesitation to adopt democracy is not only found among nationalists, it also reveals itself among more democratic-leaning Serbs. Similar to the fall of the Berlin wall, a respondent talked about the difficulty of a democratic system which requires action among a historically passive (communist to socialist) rule. Democracy requires action, both of which require change among a population that has historically been “served” by its communist leadership, and, in a different climate, by the Milosevic regime. Democracy requires a shift in both cultural and personal will.

A continued devotion to nationalism emerges as an influential political factor for Serbian respondents.

## **Kosovo Issue Distracts Focus from Women’s Equality**

There is an acute awareness that Democratic Party prospects, and thereby democratic prospects more broadly, could change overnight, rendering women’s political power a luxury rather than a demand. Many feared that a Radical win would mean women’s political roles would become overshadowed by other issues such as Kosovo.

Kosovo was cited as an issue of national concern, evidenced by the February 2008 riots in reaction to Kosovo’s declaration of independence from Serbia. Most women interviewed also say that Kosovo is a central and divisive political platform issue. In fact, many respondents consider Kosovo more of a distraction from things that truly concern citizens, like daily quality of life issues. For many women, Kosovo is used to take the focus away from gender equality and women’s political participation issues that threaten party leaders. Women, according to participants, are not particularly interested in Kosovo as a platform issue.

*“Women’s issues are second to Kosovo, [they] are last on the agenda...No one is talking about women’s issues, because of Kosovo. [Though even without this issue, men would] find something else to talk about. Before this, it was Montenegro, before that, The Hague. [The focus is] always on high political issues, and not [on topics] for ordinary citizens. I hope if we [get closer to the] European Union, ordinary everyday issues will be on the agenda, including women’s issues.”*

*“It’s all about if Serbia chooses the way toward ‘normal’ development. If Kosovo becomes independent then Serbia will shut down all diplomatic connections because [some politicians, particularly the Radical and conservative parties,] will be mad; then we will be in this vacuum for God knows how many years. If we continue cooperating with international community I think things can go very well here in next ten years. This year, we should decide to go democratic way. I think things will be better. If everything goes in the right direction, we will not need NDI in ten years. We’ll know by end of this year if we need more or less [help] from NDI.”*

*“People don’t care about Kosovo issues...people are more interested in better quality of life, travel, they want to travel. People want to hear new things. We don’t have normal issues we hear about, such as less taxes, things for normal people. If we have such an environment, [where we don’t talk about normal things] then there is no place for women’s issues.”*

Kosovo’s declaration of independence from Serbia in February 2008 touched off public outrage and unrest in Serbia. How Serbia’s uneasy relationship with Kosovo and this new and uncertain political reality will affect women’s political participation and the presence of women’s equality issues on the national agenda remains to be seen.

## Economic Strides Empower Women

Despite socio-political uncertainty in today's Serbia, women feel that increased democracy in their country is helping them take steps forward. As part of this growth, respondents are tangibly empowered by more recent economic advances. A participant said:

*“The situation is better than in 2000, the economic situation. But it’s not happening as fast as people would like it to happen... To have stability and peace [we need to be] unified [and] not separated politically.... [We need to] have politicians working together.”*

Alongside a sense of cautiousness, there is vibrancy among many Serbian respondents as they express hope for a more European-oriented, democratically evolved society. Most pointed to recent economic strides as a chief source of burgeoning empowerment. Some respondents consider privatization and particularly the reform of Serbia's banking industry, which they believe takes power away from big government, as a positive result of democratic shifts and movement toward the EU, though they also believe the course needs to be “stronger and clearer.”

Though Serbia's economy is far from stable – unemployment remains high and wages inadequate – respondents reported a fourfold increase in wages in the past eight to ten years. A participant said: “If you have a job, and you have money, then you can meet people and you can have your own opinion.” This is particularly important for women. Even if they live in a patriarchal society, financial independence gives women both a personal and practical sense of power.

Feelings of economic confidence vary by region, and though less prevalent among those interviewed, some respondents are less optimistic about economic gains. For example, they said Serbia is characterized by a weak economy and a continued gap between upper and lower classes. For many respondents, a strong sense of gender inequality is also felt within the business sector, where women are virtually absent, and in the home, where women continue to bear all of the household responsibilities in addition to their paid work. In fact, many said that their own living conditions – under-resourced economically – leaves them uninspired. For example, a respondent from South Serbia discussed her personal, and the larger national economic struggle and how these affect her concerns for the future:

*“I see Serbia and the [way of] existence among its citizens at a turning point. We still have the houses we inherited and our old cars... Serbia wasn't always poor... My son has a higher level of education [than I do] and was raised with three times the income I was, and he traveled. Now he and his family have nothing. [I feel that the] general mood among Serbs is angry and resigned.”*

Respondents living in (or from) northern Serbia are more likely to feel optimistic about Serbia's economic and democratic direction, as are respondents from parties including G17 Plus and the Democratic Party of Serbia. For example, a respondent from Vojvodina (northern Serbia) said her region has prioritized education for girls, which she feels minimizes the discrimination of women in areas such as business as well as politics and said: “We don't have those problems here.”

## Corruption Reflects Attitudinal Lags

Several respondents say that the rampant corruption that plagues Serbia is not specific to the Radical or more conservative parties. Democratic and more liberal parties are also susceptible to manipulation. An external respondent said: “[Generally, there is] a secretive rhetoric [among political parties] reminiscent of Milosevic days.”

The inconsistency inherent to Serbia's progress not only reveals itself in leadership and governmental system changes. Attitudes and behaviors are affected as well, as a result of the instability that comes with a lack of transparency and a resistance to change. Social attitudes are a pervasive, subtle and highly powerful force when it comes to resisting change. A staff person said:

*“[Serbia has made] progress since 2007, but [it’s] largely on the surface. People haven’t made the mental transition – individually or politically. Everything has been learned the hard way. [We are] still learning what it means to have a strong, accountable, functioning system.”*

EU membership brings hopes for a democracy that will help move social attitudes in a more progressive direction in part because membership is seen as yet another step further away from being an “*isolated country*”. Such change, as one NDI staff person puts it, is likely to take time. An NDI staff person said: “*[Serbia is rife with corruption]. It’s equal to Bulgaria and Romania, [but] they made it to [the] EU.*”

Serbian respondents described a culture that is straightforward but also self-protective. The “*need to learn to leave bad habits behind – bribery, finding it on your own, in the black market, outside of the system,*” as one NDI staff person referenced, is a symptom of a cultural and political history that has bred a lack of trust within most Serbs; a culture in which each person must fend for themselves.

Several respondents also said that Serbia is acclimated to a culture of corruption which holds the country back from realizing individual progress and freedoms. Often political leaders create the norms, and citizens perpetuate them. A staff person said: “*[Leaders] do not respect citizens enough not to manipulate their free will.*” This speaks to the historical and contemporary egoism of Serbia’s political parties, the same culture that many respondents say women’s leadership strengths can help radically reform.

Respondent comments also indicate that Serbia on the whole is in need of social and personal post-war reconciliation.<sup>7</sup> Some respondents say a conversation is required as part of a shift into a democratic system that demands transparency and is intolerant to corruption. A staff person said:

*“There is no social dialogue around [war crimes], a resolution process hasn’t started – [this] implicates the new generation and their core values. Textbooks justify [war crimes].”*

Serbia’s climate minimizes the extent of government responsibility around the Milosevic era and, if anything, inspires a more defensive condition.

A staff person spoke about the shift from secrecy to openness and accountability and how that has the potential to impact today’s political culture:

*“[NDI’s] Women’s Policy Forum is growing and growing, and I hope it becomes a monster, [it is] part of our women’s program and parliamentary program. It evolved because women MPs said they didn’t have access to information by government; this was purposeful, the government didn’t want MPs, any MPs, to see how decisions were made, and why. It is not a transparent society...But it’s the women MPs who demand information and the women MPs who said ‘We want to find a way to get information’ and told our NDI people. Women approach it by seeking ‘women’s specific information’ like in areas of health, etc. But, then they asked for information in other areas like defense, spending, budget, fiscal discipline and the EU. They want to be part of the power structure that makes decisions that matter, not just soft issues that women ‘should deal with.’”*

Amidst both triumphs and setbacks, slow progress and great potential, respondents share the hope for a more unified ideology across gender and party lines.

## **Political Parties Slow To Integrate Women**

Male egoism is said to characterize Serbia’s political parties. Referred to as “*a series of fiefdoms*” by one participant, many of Serbia’s political parties are plagued by sexism and corruption – a source of frustration among

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<sup>7</sup> Interestingly, recent war crimes were rarely mentioned in the interview process. In one case, a participant talked about her personal embarrassment over war crimes, yet considered the threatened loss of Kosovo a disproportionate punishment for Serbia’s role in the war.

respondents who are striving toward democratic progress. The self-centeredness that inspires some Serbian men to enter political party life “dominates” Serbian politics. More broadly, a lack of unified vision, coupled with complaints that there are too many parties, further contributes to factionalized parties. Together, Serbia’s road to democracy is slowed. Respondents said:

*“[Serbia’s political parties are] self-obsessed. There is not enough effort toward common ground with other parties. For example, [look at the] priorities. We’d never put signing agreement with EU as a priority. [Prime Minister] Kostunica, for example, had some kind of statement that he wouldn’t want that agreement to be signed. There is no common ground. Political parties need a minimum understanding for working together, but they don’t really have it. They are part of the same government but everything goes twice as slow as it should.” (Staff)*

*“Everything [good or bad] has to match their [male political figures’] interests...It’s a ‘pre-political society,’ corrupted and the system allows for it – perhaps this will change when privatization is complete.” (Staff)*

*“It’s more or less a man’s club here in Serbia; [parties] are not internally democratic, all of them. Some of them are trying to be democratic. But they are not. MPs cannot think by themselves because most political parties ask their MPs to sign blank resignations so if you don’t vote with your party they can force you to resign. That is not democratic.” (Participant)*

Respondents were quick to proclaim that Serbian women lack a political voice. The chaos stirred by a lack of unified vision during Serbia’s ongoing political transition also contributes to political party resistance around the integration of women into politics. Participants said:

*“I’d give political parties an ‘F’. Certain political parties were the only institutions that were not touched with reform; they are the blockers and stoppers of process in Serbia. In the United States and Europe people are entitled to see the decision-making process, to be informed about why parties are adopting some kinds of decisions; that means connections with accountability and being responsible, about decisions. [Here in Serbia political parties are] not transparent, especially within the party.”*

*“I wish I could say something nicer; political parties are a mirror of their citizens...During the 1990s we had a drastic fall down of information and education areas. The system of values, social values, it’s all gotten worse. [Things became] different, but [now we’re back in] slow motion.”*

*“[There are too many parties]. The Right is united, there are a lot of parties to the Left...It’s not good to have a Prime Minister say one thing and do another, and not good that we are all hostages of a [candidate picked by the Prime Minister].”*

Some respondents say a fundamental lack of respect across, and even within, political parties, poses a significant hurdle as women enter and try to advance within the political arena. An external respondent said:

*“[Women are] limited to issues like birth and caretaking. [Parliament] tends to relegate women to traditional roles... [We must build] a bridge of mutual respect and understanding (what Serbian politicians lack the most) between local government institutions and women’s groups, and open up institutions, especially at local levels, to understanding of importance of women’s participation.”*

In cases where women have pushed for inclusion and social change, political parties have responded by denying gender inequality. One respondent, a participant and regional trainer, shared an example of her own experience:

*“[Things are moving in the] right direction, but very slow. [When it comes to women in politics, things are] not very good, especially within my party. Women don’t want to take responsibility for decisions. Maybe they don’t have self confidence to think they can change things. And men underestimate women. [For example, we] tried to get something passed in my party – to mandate the presence of at least one woman on every party body. But the party said there*



*is no problem with women, and they didn't need such a measure. That writing it down would mean that there was discrimination and they cannot put that on paper because they want to prove there is no problem."*

Women are actively courted as voters during election time; but when it comes to political positions of power, women are ignored. A participant said:

*"Political parties remember women when elections come; they have weak campaigning for women, and then remember they have women who should speak in front of the party. But, strategically, women are not used, women are not so active. This is considered normal, Serbia is very conservative country."*

Respondents believe political parties are open to "grooming" women into political parties, but remain reluctant to promote women into positions of real power. Staff stated:

*"Political parties build all of this capacity [in their women] and then basically hold it back. I'm not sure what this speaks to."*

*"There is no systematic recruiting effort; there is a trend toward promotion, but there is a glass ceiling [The] local structure doesn't allow for it. There is a question of whether top level women really represent the average woman and women's rights – or are they simply skirts and not pants?"*

In Serbia, the paradox attached to the national list introduces a new hurdle. Political parties are required to include women as 30 percent of their party list. However, the party leader can change any and all list names after an electoral win.<sup>8</sup> An external respondent said: *"They are there, but have no influence. Parties manipulate public by putting women forward in pre-election campaigns, then not selecting them later for list or for seats."*

A political process that fails to provide equal access for women to political roles makes women's political advancement extremely difficult. Yet, most respondents say the wholesale absence of women from parliament would create an unwelcome backlash for parties. Accordingly, many political parties strategically assign "cooperative" women to fill those roles. A staff person said:

*"This is a particular challenge to women elected officials who may have strong opinions about things – but few that can get away with bucking leadership without losing their position... Women don't have power, only in that they're empowered by the law that at least 30 percent of people on the list have to be women... Parliament has to have 20 percent women, it's a guideline, and they would lose face if didn't put any women in. It's a system of tokenism. They only put the most loyal women in who don't cause too much of a raucous... [Yet there are] some women they can't exclude who are real movers and shakers."*

Some respondents say women are uncomfortable with the political tactics they see men adopt. As a result, even if they may harbor political ambitions, women are discouraged and turned off from the process, believing the only way to succeed is to "play dirty" and many are unwilling to do so.

Political parties do not hold all of the blame; rather, for several respondents, society also fails to support women's political interest. For example, women continue to carry what some respondents describe as "100 percent of the household workload," creating a situation where few Serbian women have the time to engage in politics. Participants said:

*"[Do women have a voice politically in Serbia?] No, not yet. We need more women. There are women in important positions, but we need more, and need to be more engaged. Some are just, they turn to families, their responsibilities there, and so they withdraw from politics. If we – from NDI, to other organizations, to political parties – could help somehow in this way, [women] could have more time and be more active."*

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<sup>8</sup> According to Serbia political experts, political party leaders can completely change their party representatives elected to parliament after the elections, substituting party loyalists for elected individuals.

*“Women are not interested enough. They have a lot of commitments, and it’s hard to equally participate.”*

*“Men have more positions than women... We need more women, but women who want to do that job, want to be engaged. Women need good education, and support from older colleagues, men or women... [women need to] know what to do, when, and how.”*

*“Politics is a very difficult business. Women [are] not that ready to get into fight, dirty games... often happen. The fights within party structures can be tough, and sometimes make women withdraw or leave it... To get through these party structures, [one] has to play by rules already in place, respect them. This requires a lot of time. Women are not willing to get involved in dishonesty or play dirty... I heard my colleagues say ‘why on earth do I need this, I have my family, profession, is it worth it?’”*

*“When you see a woman, and she has her own career, family, kids, [in order] to do something new, she needs some kind of support.”*

*“Women rarely get support from three sides – family, work, money. Women are generally poor. They cannot be independent... Also, women do everything in the house, don’t get support from husbands. Belgrade is kind of different. But, if you go deeper into rural areas, you see women are backbone of the house, she does everything in the house. And if she wants to do something else she doesn’t have so much time.”*

Socially- and self-imposed limitations contribute to a broader sense that Serbian women lack a real political voice in society. In fact, women’s political voices are said to be *“the exception, not the rule”* by one staff person. This condition is exacerbated by women’s placement in leadership positions: most respondents said that Serbian women are more visible in positions that focus on social welfare than they are in positions of power. Specifically, one participant said: *“[Women are in political positions] but with no appropriation power, without a presence in areas like defense and interior.”*

Some attribute this absence to continued gender inequality, a lack of social and familial support, and a patriarchal society that makes it personally and logistically difficult for women to commit to a life of politics. Superficial power – and changes – means women lag behind their male counterparts in critical policy areas like finance and security. Respondents fear that superficial power strips women of political credibility. Moreover, respondents note that this makes women less visible as leaders, which means they are unable to be positive models that communities, particularly women, can *“look to,”* as one participant indicated.

## **Some Parties Touted as Progressive for Women**

While the broader political party context is lagging in its recruitment of women, there is a sense among respondents that women are gaining ground politically and a few parties are considered to be making some progress around gender equality. Participants say:

*“There has been significant change here; with NDI’s help and other organizations dealing with women’s issues. In general, political parties are engaging women. In my party... I think we achieve best results in this area; it’s the first party to establish a quota system for women in the parliament, and also within executive bodies and the party itself. Our president is still a man, but two women are deputy vice presidents, and we have four women ministers... [We are different] because we started in politics in an atypical way... women have been in significant positions since the start... It’s harder for women to move into the classical political system here; women don’t have enough [political] strength to move into higher levels.”*

*“The main difference between my [party] and others is that we had two women presidents of the party. Women were the majority. I have never felt I’m a woman and have a problem. I have felt supported by men and women in my party, and it’s great. It’s a small party, civic liberal atmosphere, values. We promoted that. Most members are highly educated.”*

*“In my party we don’t have strong women’s network because there is not a sense that we need [it]...men and women feel equal, no need to special network. But we are aware of gender equality, trying to have gender equality in programs within parties.”*

*“Encourage other women, show things are possible. No matter how undermined throughout life, discouraged to show her potential, we show it is possible. Politics is a beautiful business, a...creative business. We are sharing the ideas of how the future might look. Once you start to believe me, creation of future begins – women see other women successful in economy, financial, politics, etc. They also see that changes are possible. [For example], five years ago it would have been forbidden to say women are suffering family violence; if [someone had] dared to say that, [it would have been considered to be] attacking traditional Serbian family. Now, they know it can be addressed. [Things are still] far from ideal functioning, but if I save one woman from being beaten or killed by her partner; then, I did well. [It’s about] being a role model.”*

Staff<sup>9</sup> shared these ideas:

*“With the exception of [one party], parties do not actively recruit women...They still don’t recognize women as a resource...They are discouraged from real political engagement and certainly from leadership roles.”*

*“In Serbia, there are parties that are more progressive in this area and parties that are not. [Three are named as] the progressive parties when it comes to encouraging women’s participation in their structures.”*

Women from liberal and progressive parties generally tend to be more optimistic about women’s progress within political parties and about political party receptivity to women in politics. However, it should be noted that in 2004 the Radical Party had the only big city mayoral win of a woman candidate in Novi Sad, Vojvodina.

Political party work serves as a place for respondents to practice acquired skills. Women feel politically empowered and personally self-confident as a result of extensive participation in NDI trainings and educational programs.

## Women Working Together

Raised in the same society as the male political leaders and citizens, who often do not believe that women have the political experience to be taken seriously, Serbian women are also susceptible to adopting negative stereotypes that women are less politically able than their male counterparts. One participant said:

*“Women don’t support each other. It’s easier to work with men, as women are often seen as competition. They need to know there is room for everyone and a role for all.”*

The sentiment among many respondents is that women with more education, higher economic status, or established political profiles tend to support one another more easily than women in lower income brackets, who tend to be less exposed to female leaders and role models.

Furthermore, many women involved in or interested in politics reportedly perceive that they are not equipped to be leaders. A participant said: *“Women need to be convinced that their opinions will be represented and that they can make a difference. They need increased self-confidence.”*

Some respondents indicated that rural women are also less likely than their urban counterparts to support other women’s political involvement. Rural women and those women with less education are perceived as being less likely to vote for other women, and may even consider women’s political involvement inappropriate or

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<sup>9</sup> It should be noted that staff and participants’ perceptions of the progress being made by individual parties related to meaningfully recruiting women and taking substantive steps toward gender equality sometimes differed.

“*dirty*.” Rural women’s tendency to support male leaders and candidates stems, in part, from the patriarchal environment that dominates, in particular, rural Serbia. A participant said:

*“There is still a huge [male] influence in the Serbian family; [for example], men decide who to vote for. Like when we go door to door campaigning and a woman answers the door, she says ‘Don’t ask me; come [back] later when my husband is here.’ That is not uncommon in Serbia. In rural areas it’s especially common; in Belgrade it’s less normal. Belgrade is more like a country in a country.”*

While a rural-urban distinction emerges in Serbia, Belgrade continues to have its own political power struggles, including resistance to women in politics and cross-party work. One participant described this by saying, “*Belgrade is still ideologically immature.*”

Some respondents, staff in particular, described a culture in which urban women sometimes make their way into less permeable, more male-dominated areas such as budget and security through other more traditionally female areas, including health, domestic violence, and other areas male politicians find unthreatening. A program participant said:

*“[Men have] no objections if women [are] in [humanitarian work, fighting against violence, and similar] roles. [The more women]... ask for decision-making positions in local branches, the more they are perceived as competitors. Serbia is male dominated; [it gets] hard. Women have to be twice as good as male candidates. That is also why many women decide to give-up – it’s very hard work doing that.”*

Domestic violence emerges as a concrete example of gender inequality. In fact, several respondents point to Serbia’s 2005 family law, which sought to harmonize domestic legislation regarding family relations with related European legislation and practices that take a more comprehensive view of women’s rights within the family and the rights of the child. The family law symbolizes a positive change that punishes domestic violence offenders. One respondent said years ago this conversation would have been considered an affront to Serbian families. According to some respondents, while some progress has been made to address domestic violence, Serbia still lacks a national strategy to combat domestic violence, or as an external respondent said: “*[There is a] serious lack of implementation in [domestic violence] legislation; [instead, there is a] manipulation of women’s votes, especially regarding violence against women issues.*”

Many point to NDI outreach as imperative not only to educate women, but to “*support*” them. One participant captured the views of her peers when she said: “*Empower women so they can empower one another.*”

## **Women Embody Democratic Strengths**

Serbia’s patriarchal tendencies do not discourage its women. While a male-driven political culture clearly creates barriers to women’s political participation, it may also serve women’s political potential. Many respondents said that women’s greatest strengths are precisely what is missing from today’s political party climate: the capacity to be responsive to constituent voices and needs; to organize and strategize; and to effectively and transparently communicate within and across parties and citizen groups. One participant stated:

*“Women deal with everyday things, they speak in ordinary language. They are workaholics, and committed. They prioritize social issues and human rights, and think of quality of life.”*

These qualities show up within their political party work and as they work with constituents. For example, the lack of transparency that has characterized Serbia’s political processes, particularly its political parties, is something that women candidates can use to their advantage. Women are perceived to be more honest and transparent than their male counterparts. A participant said: “*Women [are] seen as more understanding, more caring about me and my problems, more honest, less corrupt.*”

Serbian respondents see the country's leadership characterized largely by self-centered politicians – i.e., male politicians – who prioritize their own personal needs and agenda over those of their constituents. In fact, some respondents indicated that men often go into politics as an avenue for fulfilling their own personal goals, such as acquiring a job they want or a new house, wealth, etc. The qualities respondents ascribed to women embody precisely the opposite, and meet Serbia's increasingly democratically-driven needs. Respondents said:

*“Women [have the appeal that] they provide rational solutions to family issues.”* (Participant)

*“Women want to change things.”* (Participant)

*“Women are more reflective, considered more reliable, consistent and responsible.”* (Participant)

*“If women were leading we'd never have wars. [Their approach would be] calm, normal, strategic. [They] would plan more, and wouldn't have an ego. Women offer a different dimension from men. Women do so many things and also have added value.”* (Participant)

*“[Serbian] women are the ones who are asking the questions and they are the ones who work together. Women sit across the table and see another person, a person with a family, not just a person with a different opinion. They work in trying to get solutions. Serbia is still male-dominated and very macho. In the United States [people and politicians] understand they have to have a win-win. Here [in Serbia], it's win-and-destruction-dominated. Vanquishing your opponent is the goal here. Women don't do it that way, they don't think that way, and they don't act that way... They work together if there's a disagreement. They each get their point across. There's not a lot of that [among men] now.”* (Staff)

*“Women bring tremendous strengths to political leadership; strengths that, according to many respondents, are precisely what many Serbs are seeking. I think they would be better in negotiations and in terms of being a good communicator, naturally so. Women bring less personal interest into politics, and bring more community interests into politics. They could be the asset for society.”* (Staff)

Credibility and endurance bolsters women who have “worked hard” to acquire a position in political office. One participant said:

*“Women who succeed getting through those troubles, they're more successful than the others because they had a tough road to go through to get to the top. It's natural selection, and they have strong characters. Women are more efficient and better focused on problems than men. They are readier to resolve problems even without political connotations. Or they will leave politics aside to resolve a problem if [it will help the public]... For example, there was a petition last week from a war criminal in Bosnia who is in poor health and needed medical attention. The woman politician involved paid attention to the issue and requested his health records. That alone could be seen as a problem politically. When she posed the question, it will become a political issue when she's just trying to help. She won't have majority support for the decision... [But will have to take] full responsibility for it... Other less sensitive issues, like child's issues, help with more consensus.”*

Women bring many of the strengths that respondents described as critical to bringing about the day-to-day quality of life changes they yearn for in Serbia – desired changes that drive many people to vote. As a result, women may find themselves in a political environment whose democratic vision demands precisely these qualities.

## Quotas Open the Door

A national quota is a significant step in helping women enhance their political profile. Respondents said:

*“Serbia is not an advanced society. We are even a pre-democratic society. Women need to be empowered, women and youth, on a level to be in decision-making positions. Of course it is good to have quotas as a first step.”* (Participant)

*“If not for quotas, parties wouldn’t see any benefit [of having women in office]. [With women in office, as a result of a quota, society] recognizes women are more hardworking and less corrupt.” (Staff)*

*“It’s not all about numbers, but that’s the first step, it opens the door... respect quotas. It won’t bring quality at the beginning, but will bring greater participation over time...[Place women in] high profile positions...to show that women are equally represented as elected officials.” (Staff)*

Most respondents say women’s political progress requires mandatory quotas. While quotas do not necessarily result in gender equality, they provide entry into a male-dominated political world. A staff person said: *“It opens the door,”* while an external respondent said: *“The quota introduction and the beginning of public discussion helped parties internalize [women in politics] more. Changes have happened since 2000.”*

Respondents, particularly program participants, feel that with time, the combination of increased visibility of women in politics, coupled with their enhanced political knowledge and confidence, will help Serbs perceive women and men as equally viable candidates and leaders.

Strategic placement on national and local party lists is key for women’s progress. Respondents said that women need to be in decision-making positions and, in order to get there, need to be placed high on candidate lists in order to increase their chances of being elected. Today, 30 percent of the national lists require women’s names. Part of the problem lies in representation and accountability: party leaders are not required to keep any of the same members – men or women – on the national list even if they win the party nomination.

At the same time, most respondents feel a mandatory quota does not give women the credibility needed to be taken seriously as a leader or decision maker, but instead, carries the weight of lagging attitudes that is generally ascribed to political parties and the men that still aim to govern them. Participants said:

*“[Women have a political voice], but there are invisible barriers everywhere.”*

*“All mechanisms are being used to get women involved [in political parties], but it’s only cosmetic.”*

*“Women in parties – it’s happening but it’s only a numbers game, it’s superficial...[For example] there is no women’s forum in my party and there are constant delays in the formation of one from women [because women] are not well-established in the party.”*

*“[Political power for women is] all on a surface, [it’s] still the beginning. Some parties went far in a way with that, which is good, [like with] women’s forums...still women’s forums don’t have their own computers, and are not organized. They make leaflets during campaigns and stuff, but are not strong enough to do their own election campaign stuff. They are not strong enough to build women’s headquarters; only women’s political forums. This is not serious work, but [they exist] in each political party. Men allowed them because they realize they need women voters.”*

Program participant feelings are shared among other respondents, who feel quotas must be bolstered by real substance if women are going to progress politically. As one staff person shared: *“Once elected, the biggest problem is that those women still don’t have a voice of influence, and represent mere numbers or quotas.”*

## **A Beacon for Women’s Equality**

NDI is known for its promotion of democracy in Serbia, largely through political party and campaign work. When it comes to gender equality, NDI is considered a change agent, and tremendously successful in facilitating the inclusion of women in Serbian politics. Participants said:

*“NDI has contributed to the recognition of women’s needs in Serbia through the distribution of materials and emphasizing their potential for leadership – to open new doors for women in political parties, and to teach specifically about campaigning for women and by women.”*

*“[NDI] works in different spheres and encourages women to take part in politics... and is only one of three organizations I know of that work with women in politics in Serbia. This kind of support is effective by supporting party women in establishing formal women’s structure within the party, such as local branches, and in party structures.”*

*“The beauty of working with women is that social behavior is contagious. [A woman who attends an] NDI seminar leaves and she is a virus – social, talking, shares... When people are motivated, share positive emotions... it’s nice to feel nice. When you’re a woman it’s meaningless if you don’t share.”*

There is great enthusiasm among respondents about NDI as a political resource. Participants feel personally changed by their experiences. For most women interviewed, working with NDI – whether in trainings, one-on-one meetings with staff, or in any other capacity – the gains are more than solely professional or political; the sense of personal support and empowerment has helped many women transform their resources and skill sets and, in turn, their lives.

Respondents elaborate about the ways NDI helps create policy and structural access for women entering politics; on an individual level, they talk about how NDI has helped its program participants internalize a new sense of meaning and self-confidence that has contributed to personal growth. Women talked about a sense of empowerment received simply by being asked to participate in an NDI program. Participants said:

*“NDI helps with its political education, personal growth, and psychological support...[It has helped increase women’s] awareness about their choices and opportunities.”*

*“[NDI gave me] self-confidence, especially with media and connecting with others, taught me how to be a model for young people.”*

*“[NDI has helped me, and] they will help you...I became a youth vice president. I was nothing when I started NDI, and afterwards, I got the skills and was recognized by my party for it.”*

*“I was just a girl in the party, gaining skills [with the help of NDI]. I advanced in my party. My political development all came from NDI, since the beginning. I’m an NDI fan for a lifetime. We were so lost with Milosevic – someone for the first time entered Serbia and helped us really learn, organize, taught us how to message. That is crucial - to have someone in all of that mess you can rely on, from a party leader to someone in the field, everyone felt they could count on NDI.”*

*“[NDI] will change your life and give you lifelong learning (this is not part of the Serbian mentality)...[NDI’s impact on women is] excellent. It’s complex work because we don’t have in our minds that we women are the muscles in our lives - learning to feel self-confident, to find our opinion and how to deal with it, time management.”*

*“Many successful political women leaders have come through NDI’s trainings; it’s a model of continuous training and shared experience...[Through NDI, I have changed my life.] I use all of the principles I have used in my professional work, including goal-setting and mobilizing people.”*

Across the board, respondents indicated that a central thread of NDI’s success lies in its relationship-building emphasis. Women feel supported and educated by close relationships with NDI staff, not simply the programs themselves.

Amidst praise for NDI's exemplary efforts, some NDI staff highlighted the importance of two factors. First, an NDI staff person emphasized that the bulk of women's progress in Serbia must be credited to women themselves: *"I wouldn't attribute it all to NDI, women who are dedicated to change and exploration found NDI and really benefitted. They learned to be strategic."* Second, among some staff members, there are mixed views about NDI's attention towards women's political progress. Some NDI staff lamented what they see as inadequate attention toward women's political participation programs due to decreased allocation of funds toward this area. A staff person stated:

*"We don't promote or invest in women's programs enough...something needs to be done on an organizational level. I'm not sure if staff in regions understand why we have these programs, including my colleagues; I didn't get it until I began to be involved...Have women's programs as a real priority; assign [part of the] budget and staff to deal with that. It used to be a priority...it's also budget stuff, we're becoming smaller."*

The call for a clear mandate to prioritize NDI's work on women's political participation from the very highest level comes from a staff member who said: *"Do this systematically in a global strategy from the DC end, and this would help country planning"*

## **NDI's Strengths are Extensive**

Given this somewhat turbulent political landscape, and both a personal and professional investment by respondents in changing this landscape, it is not surprising that for respondents across the board, NDI's strengths are many: training, networking, youth programs and assistance in equipping activists with the tools to create political change among others.

Trainings are a particular favorite among Serbian women participants. They asserted that they gained knowledge, built self-confidence, and networked in venues otherwise unavailable to them. Several respondents emphasized the ongoing success that has come from grooming women as political leaders. In fact, NDI is not only a key resource for political skills, it is the obvious resource in Serbia. A participant and regional trainer said: *"Basic campaigning techniques at the local branch level are known as 'NDI techniques.'"*

More broadly, NDI has helped create networks and avenues that allow women to inform the political process. An external respondent said: *"[Women] wouldn't be there if it weren't for NDI; though [there's] still a lot of work to be done."* NDI is applauded both by participants and staff for its strong relationship-building skills.

NDI's willingness to work with political parties and facilitate unprecedented communication has improved women's integration into politics. A participant said: *"NDI proves its willingness to help as [the] party expands and proves [its] efficiency."*

Respondents also said NDI has helped with significant women's rights advances in Serbia, including the creation of a Parliamentary Committee on Gender Equality and the facilitation of political party roundtable discussions.

## **A Model Regional Trainers Program**

Serbia's regional training efforts are a resounding success. Most respondents believe NDI's training efforts have not only helped integrate women into Serbia's political structures, but have also helped influence attitudinal shifts among Serbian men and women. A staff person said:

*"NDI has had huge success with candidate trainings from the beginning of our program here in 1997. Many of the original women that we have trained are now in actual leadership positions and active in political life. They are the same women who have successfully pushed for the quota system to be included in legislation, the [same] women who have successfully pushed to establish the Gender Equality Committee, the [same women] who pushed for the establishment of the gender equality commissions at the local level, and they are now leaders of women's forums of their parties."*



In addition, there is some speculation that NDI's extensive regional training program may explain a minimal reported gap by respondents between program activities and technical assistance provided by NDI in rural versus urban areas of Serbia.<sup>10</sup>

Respondents, many of whom are actively engaged as NDI regional trainers in addition to their political party work, have witnessed the profound impact of educating women about gender equality, women's empowerment and political participation. In turn, most are extremely enthusiastic about NDI's programs and their own involvement in the process. Several program participants, as well as NDI staff, talk about NDI's powerful impact on participants and on Serbian women in general. They said:

*"We have a great staff that has had really strong relationships with women MPs and at the local levels, women's equality commissions. NDI is not condescending like 'we have a lot to teach you.' It's more like 'we know you get it and you can do it; we're just going to share tools that work in other places.' NDI is respectful." (Staff)*

*"NDI directly affects women's movement in parties [with] youth and women [NDI has its] biggest impact. There is a double impact. What gives me energy is that I see the progress of people in the program...[And to] see that the investment of time and money is not wasted. [They] are going to do something great." (Participant)*

*"NDI already did a good job with women. NDI summer schools gave us knowledge that NDI is aware of the potential in youth and women, and [in turn, NDI] invited them to seminars. I'm a participant. The knowledge I gained through NDI trainings made it easier for me to develop more and go further. [That is also true for my women colleagues]." (Participant)*

*"NDI is known for training programs...training programs are very popular. People consider those trainings to be a very good base for their political roles. One cannot be a good politician if [he or she has] never been to an NDI seminar, that's the feeling, among democratic groups." (Participant)*

NDI Serbia has trained women from all regions of Serbia and integrated them into their outreach efforts, and now relies on them extensively as an educational, networking and motivational political resource.

## Exemplary Youth Engagement

For many respondents, NDI's youth programs have served to empower women; some even say that the broader political education offered in youth trainings may be more effective than immersing female newcomers into a women-specific training program. One example of youth empowerment lies in the respondent pool alone – about half of the women interviewed were under 40 years old. A participant captured this:

*"I was more interested in youth, [than I was in women's activism], but these [youth programs] were really important steps toward raising activism of women. [For example,] at one of the trainings, the topic was public appearance, and so many women there were afraid of how to appear and speak in public. Some were politically active women, who still felt they didn't have these skills, and probably some would withdraw from that activity and let men do it, since they were not confident in that area. But NDI helped them with that... they wouldn't have been able to do it otherwise."*

Trainings that target youth, including the very popular NDI summer school effort, are touted as one of NDI Serbia's greatest strengths by most respondents, many of whom have participated in youth trainings. A participant said:

*"[NDI does a] very good thing working with youth. This is priority number one because in Serbia we need a change in leadership...and young people are recognizing that they want to be part of NDI, they consider it a place to get top skills for being politically involved in Serbia, and they know their leadership went through NDI training. In [the*

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<sup>10</sup> This is also influenced by components including decentralization, population and geographic size, and religious culture.

*parties'] youth programs, we have more applicants than we can actually have in our schools; it's a pity, we have to turn people down."*

NDI staff share the sense of accomplishment expressed by participants around youth programs, and some believe that NDI's success for capacity development makes these programs a critical resource for Serbia's political future, particularly when it comes to advancing women's equality and political leadership. A staff person stated:

*"We come in as partners and help share best practices and skills, supportive after the fact, workshops and trainings. We [also] work with women in our youth program. Here we see attitudes changing; strong talented women coming through this youth program through political parties; they're very confident, exemplary, just like the guys; but the way they act, work with colleagues: different, totally. Women come along as more confident and forceful, not aggressive."*

Different strategies are proposed for reaching participants based on age, skills level and geography. For example, some respondents feel the integration of gender perspectives into youth programs was highly effective for them as they were first entering the political world, while for others, women's empowerment may have been better achieved in a more deliberate venue, such as a women's training program.

## **Conclusion**

Tangible political shifts, marked by elections, more progressive legislation, and increased public engagement, all bolster the hope expressed by respondents in their advances toward gender equality and increased women's political participation. Though changes may be slow-coming, as a staff person said: *"[These signify] a small revolution,"* while a participant said: *"The transition will take baby steps."*

At the same time, a history of corruption and a lack of transparency within Serbia's political and cultural climate, particularly within political parties, is not something that will change overnight. But it sets things in the direction hoped for by respondents – a direction infused by the possibility of real democracy.

## NDI Program History

NDI has worked in Nepal since 1994 when the Institute conducted programs focused on building the capacity of domestic election monitoring groups, encouraging women's voting and expanding media coverage of elections. In 1995, NDI began work with the parliament to strengthen legislative oversight capacity. Since that time, projects have also included voter education, civic education, ethics and anti-corruption aims as.

NDI began focusing on women's political participation in Nepal in 1997. This led to the launch of a multi-faceted, non-partisan program launched in 2001 designed to increase the political participation of local level women leaders and activists in eight districts, with an emphasis on increasing the number and effectiveness of Nepali women in local government. In December 2002, NDI staff held a training of trainers workshop for 100 women political party activists and trainers. From 2001-2004, NDI built the capacity of political parties to develop women political leaders, training almost 11,000 candidates. In 2006, the Institute facilitated the creation of the Multi-Party Women's Caucus to campaign for issues of particular relevance to women within political parties and across Nepal and to field qualified women candidates for local government offices. In August 2008, NDI began a two year program to strengthen the role of women in the newly-elected Constituent Assembly. The program will train women and male party leaders in political communication, parliamentary rules of procedure, gender and social inclusion, children's and human rights, the constitutional drafting process, constituency services and support, federalism, and other issues.

Funding for NDI Nepal since 1994 has totaled \$8,730,264.00.

## Background

Nepal has witnessed dramatic political changes in the past 20 years. The introduction of democracy, the Maoist insurgency, and ensuing power struggle between pro-democracy forces, the King, and the Maoists have created a climate of unrest and violence, amidst profound hope for democratically-oriented change.

The international community has been a witness and moderator to Nepal's cultural shifts and political growth. Protests stirred political changes in Nepal, inciting conversation around the new Nepalese constitution and the landmark April 10, 2008 Constituent Assembly (CA) elections, which was Nepal's first national elections in nine years. The elections were a key milestone in implementing the 2006 Peace Accord between the government and the Maoist rebels. The newly elected CA, which is tasked with drafting a new constitution for the country, inherits severe unrest in the southern plains, high expectations for political inclusion by historically marginalized groups, and the need to negotiate new political arrangements after a socially and politically destabilizing civil war.

Today, a burgeoning democracy means more women are slowly entering the political realm. Key years for Nepalese citizens, and more specifically for women in politics, include 1990, when as a result of the popular movement, a new constitution was introduced that shifted Nepal from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional one and reinstated a multiparty democracy that had been absent since the 1950s.

This significant change also helped create political space for women who became more politically involved. In the 1990s, women were invited as leaders of two popular movements: in 1990, a popular movement that reduced King Birendra to a constitutional monarch and in 1996, which marked the start of the Maoist insurgency and nationwide violence that still plagues Nepal. A third people's movement was launched in 2006 against King Gyanendra, who had taken the throne in 2001 following a palace massacre and who had seized absolute power in 2005. Today, women are active, to varying extents, in all of the major parties, each of which also includes a women's wing.

Nepal's caste system is a defining characteristic of its culture, and caste inequality and ethnic tension are pervasive throughout the country, often stirring violence. At the time of the Women's Political Party Assessment interviews, the political climate included daily violence, with over 500 incidents of political violence – mainly Maoist – that week alone. Such political violence has become part of the backdrop of Nepal's political and social landscape.

While women are inspired by change, rural isolation and severe economic struggles make political engagement difficult. Current events such as the April 2008 CA elections and the development of Nepal's new Constitution, scheduled to begin after the election, has heralded new opportunities of Nepalese citizens, particularly women.

A total of 18 interviews were conducted in Nepal between March 12 and 14, 2008. Interviews were conducted with five NDI staff members, seven NDI program participants and six external respondents.

## Deeply-Entrenched Gender Inequality Stifles Women's Political Participation

The sentiment among Nepal's respondents was engaged and hopeful, but burdened. Rife with political strife that entails physical danger most respondents say Nepal's environment, including its political landscape, is calling for a democratic infusion. At the same time, the country is struggling for the political stability to allow its citizens to embrace and enforce this democratic transition. Women's political progress today, as well as their hopes for long-term change, are currently taking a backseat to immediate national issues, such as security and the April 2008 CA elections, which some respondents say trumpet women's inclusion on the political agenda. A staff person said:

*“The end of political conflict will have the greatest impact. It's not easy to get others to focus on women at a time of intense uncertainty and conflict. Women's issues will assume greater prominence when the political conflict is played out.”*

Women's voices have long been silenced in Nepal and this has left most of them unprepared to fully engage in public life, particularly political activity. Nepal's patriarchal climate has historically precluded any possibility of equality for women. Respondents share the conviction that women face huge challenges as they move outside of traditional domestic roles. Given these extraordinary cultural barriers, NDI's work promoting women's political participation in Nepal represents significant progress. A participant said: *“Although nowhere are women's voices stronger than men's, women are feeling more empowered now; they feel they have a stronger voice than before.”*

Some respondents feel that the time is ripe for women's personal and political growth. They assert that Nepalese women embody the integrity and appeal that make them strong candidates. A staff person said: *“Women can be more appealing than men as candidates, but their capacity needs to be built.”*

Respondents believe that there must be greater participation by women in politics in order to raise the visibility of women role models. Many respondents cited the need for role models and the need to mobilize women. Participants said: *“Women need to support each other and have campaigns on women's issues,”* and *“It is women's responsibility to participate in politics. Women need to believe in themselves and their capabilities.”* The perception of politics as a “dirty” business adds to the difficulty of increasing engagement by women.

Women work hard to get by, according to many respondents, which make it difficult for them to consider the “luxury” of political involvement. An external respondent said: *“[Women] are not participating because they're busy surviving”*

In Nepal, this stems specifically from harsh economic barriers as well as entrenched patriarchy and repressive social norms. Since women's unequal status manifests itself in a variety of ways – including economic disempowerment, disproportionate household responsibilities and stifled social mobility – a more holistic approach to women's political party programming is essential. A staff person said: *“It is very hard to get women to political training because they need permission from their husbands.”*

Barriers to full participation in civic life include the threat of physical danger. One respondent told of a woman from a rural hill district that spoke about a political issue “*without her husband’s permission*” and was beaten for it.

Other respondents – especially program participants – said such incidents are not uncommon. There is broad agreement that the threat of physical punishment affects women’s political interest, energy and confidence. Participants reported:

*“I was beaten by police four to five years ago during rallies for my party and didn’t get any ticket. But the politicians who won didn’t do any fighting for their party. I have been fighting for a long time, but my party doesn’t recognize me. They still get positions because they are male. I’ve been in jail many times for my party. They discriminate against me.”*

*“I’m pessimistic that there’s a future for women. Women are not participating. They talk about 50 percent female participation, but I’m not hopeful that it will take place. Women don’t have money and transportation to campaign. Without financial support, they don’t get tickets directly, so women don’t get representation. The parties told them that they should bring money, but that’s not helpful. Also, there’s no security in terms of safety. Anyone can kidnap you and police are not honest. Police are involved in rape too, so it’s a difficult situation for women in politics.”*

Because they tend to believe the oft-repeated stereotypes of themselves, women are hesitant to engage politically and continue to rely on male leaders for political direction. In this climate, women struggle to make their voices heard. Their efforts to enter and advance within the political realm are thwarted by the government itself. A staff person said:

*“Women do not have a voice in politics. The culture along with structure of parties works against them. There is a lot of talk, but no action in the parties. Their promises to women are ignored. The government signs agreements with women politicians but has ignored the agreements, even if it’s been signed multiple times. The government lies through its teeth and people don’t respond strongly.”*

Some say changes require attitudinal shifts that will come with involving men, particularly male leaders, in training and other dialogue sessions hosted or facilitated in some way by NDI. NDI’s work entails shifting the patriarchal messages that both men and women have internalized. A staff person said:

*“The Nepalese culture is very sexist. Women have to find time to get involved in politics outside of family work... men are not supportive. Even the men in parties question why the women are participating”*

Most respondents believe attitudes will change only when women achieve meaningful integration into politics; once this happens, women may gain increasing involvement in all other areas, including male-dominated fields, such as economics.

## **Women’s Fortitude Helps Bring Change Despite Challenges**

Despite significant hurdles, there is hope and determination among respondents. The implementation of a national quota, alongside Nepal’s popular movements and political education and training (brought largely by NDI), have helped pave the way for women. There is a sense that progress is slowly being integrated by political parties who are increasingly looking out for the interests of the Nepalese people. Respondents perceive a shift in Nepal’s political landscape, one that incites both optimism and anxiety. An external respondent stated:

*“[Progress entails political parties who are] working for the people now. They are more conscious of this now; [there is a] social movement for the inclusion and diversification of power.”*

Democratic changes have helped women gain some political ground as a result of a recent 33 percent quota requirement. There is a sense of optimism, but it is tempered by the many challenges that persist. Respondents said:

*“It’s been positive now. Before [the People’s Movement in] 2006, women wanted to succeed but didn’t have a chance, because they didn’t work internally [within political parties]. After 2006, they’ve come forward and participated. It was very positive and things are moving in the right direction.”* (Participant)

*“Things in Nepal are not disappointing, but there’s no ground to be excited. If you look at past involvement of women in politics, it’s now increasing in comparison. In the last election [in 1990], there were five percent female candidates. Now it’s 33 percent.”* (Staff)

Even as Nepalese women slowly begin to make their voices heard in areas where they have long been silenced, they must still struggle against a traditionally male-dominant culture in Nepal:

*“Women are inspired and now aware of their rights. But now male partners are aggressive and think about how they can dominate women again. Male political leaders think negatively; they think the wife should stay at home and look after the family.”* (Participant)

*“Nepal is still a male-dominated society. There’s a tendency of leaders to think that women aren’t as capable as men. So they bring in more men in their party. There are statements from parties to say that in principle they are inclusive of women, but they haven’t been practicing what they talk about.”* (Participant)

*“There’s a positive movement in gender political change, empowerment of women. Women are more conscious today than they were before. When we talk about empowerment, we talk about women. It’s not fully satisfied, but improving. Women haven’t played a significant role in politics as yet. Some are bright political leaders, but their time is yet to mature. So it’s limited to a few personalities and hasn’t come for all women in Nepal.”* (External)

*“The attitude of parties is difficult to define. Everything is still patriarchal. It may take time, but it will change. It’s changing because women are fighting. For example, when a committee was formed in the interim constituency, they didn’t pick any women out of ten members, though they were supposed to give the 33 percent quota for women’s participation.”* (Staff)

External respondents were particularly vocal about the traditional limitation of women to domestic roles and their exclusion from public office:

*“Women haven’t had a chance to be really represented because of the public-private dichotomy.”*

*“Political participation alone is not going to transform political parties. Coming out of the home and into the public is key.”*

*“A major problem is women’s household responsibilities.”*

Given the ever-present climate of sexism, women will require great fortitude as they strive for equal representation in political life in Nepal. One external respondent said there are three types of women who are drawn to politics: *“Those with a natural affinity for it; [those with] a social or familial background of politics; and [those with] a tough background looking for changes.”*

There has been visible progress of women in public life in Nepal, and it is beginning to have a ripple effect, inspiring more women to get politically involved, and more men to work on their behalf. A participant perceived a true attitudinal shift:

*“Until 1990, Nepal was an absolute monarchy with no political parties. Women’s participation in politics was not on the scene; it was a very patriarchal society. Then, their voices were introduced in terms of quality (from educated women) and demanded empowerment. Almost all parties have come to accept women’s voices. [An increase of women’s visibility], women role models, and more media coverage of women are manifesting a great impact.”*

While the initial rise to power of Maoist forces – who ascended while espousing a rhetoric of enfranchisement and equality – is seen by respondents as signifying a desire for change among the historically disenfranchised, there appears to be a growing impatience by Nepalese society with what is now seen as Maoist political bullying.<sup>11,12</sup> An external respondent said: “*Maoists are thugs who don’t know what being poor is about.*” The desire for change is evident among more educated, urban-based citizens, such as those interviewed, but there is also talk of outreach to rural areas and the marginalized. Respondents see in this the hope for concrete socio-political change in Nepal, and base much of this hope on the work of NDI.

Some respondents also say that NDI’s decentralizing efforts by extending its reach into rural areas – particularly with respect to education – is essential to politically engage women (and men) in Nepal. Some believe NDI should become directly involved in helping to provide basic education in rural areas.

Similar to findings across the other three research sites, respondents urged NDI to engage in trainings that integrate both men and women; this is discussed at length in the Best Practices and Recommendations section.

## Male Political Party Heads Resistant to Power-Sharing

The belief that parties are increasingly working more in the interest of the Nepalese people and that women have an increased presence in this landscape is at the same time accompanied by many respondents’ views that parties often fail to do the right thing.

There is no question that political parties in Nepal are resistant to internal democratic changes, which pose a threat to longstanding male power. This is particularly true when it comes to the integration of women, whose presence has grown thanks to their extensive lobbying efforts coupled with pressure from the international community. Respondents said:

*“Parties are not keen to involve women, but they have to. Every party has more women at the lowest levels because there is competition to do so. Growth [has happened] because women have lobbied, and because of international pressure.”* (External)

*“Everything will have an effect because we have a patriarchal mindset; normally, they don’t accept women as their leader[s]. State and law will need to come together. If you have quotas, then the government only wants to meet the quota. They take the minimum as the maximum.”* (Staff)

Not only do political parties fail to advocate for women’s rights, but they are also opportunistic, and have found ways to turn efforts to increase women’s political participation to their political advantage. Respondents said:

*“Parties recruit women at the grassroots level because they need workers, but they don’t recruit or promote women at the policy or leadership level.”* (Participant)

*“All political parties are unjust toward women and all have marginalized and overlooked women within, and all engage in political violence toward women.”* (Participant)

*“Political parties are not women-friendly. They should have 50 percent representation of women, but 33 percent is a great improvement from [the former five percent requirement].”* (Participant)

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<sup>11</sup> The Maoist counter-action against democracy has contributed significantly to the political violence. An external respondent said: “*The Maoist party still wants to emerge on top, but people don’t trust them, and the party is not reconciled to this. This creates a dilemma for the party. On the one hand, they want to emerge victorious, but in light of poor prospects for victory, they want to disrupt this democratic process.*”

<sup>12</sup> A Nepal political expert points to this as “*very effective bullying.*” visible in the results of the April 10, 2008 CA elections. An interesting contrast is noted between the poor public image of the Maoists and their parallel reputation among some as champions of the marginalized. While they have succeeded in bringing progressive ideas into the political discourse, it has been noted that they have done virtually nothing to address them.

*“Political parties need lots of reform and more internal democracy. They are very hierarchical, and bad at recruiting women. Women are limited to women’s wings or departments.”* (Staff)

*“The quota system is complicated. When it came time to nominate, the parties failed to meet quotas for women. Because of a lack of interest on the part of the parties, they haven’t developed the skills of women. The women can’t prove themselves because the parties themselves don’t have skills. Women are drawn into parties by those who have similar attitudes; usually men recruit.”* (Staff)

*“Women’s participation in parties is still low, but compared to other countries, it’s getting better, especially with the people’s movement and [the] 33 percent [quota]. They need a lot of training so they can have meaningful participation; [they] need to have quotas for women of different ethnic groups.”* (External)

Respondents describe political party efforts to internally democratize as *“insincere and dishonest.”* Rather than a real push for women to develop and advance politically, parties are said to only recruit women, as one external respondent noted, *“in principle.”* A respondent captured part of this gender disparity: *“The women who are often nominated are those who are weak against strong men, because they want the strong men to win.”*

In fact, respondents frequently talk about the *“yesing you”* phenomenon, whereby Nepalese men, particularly political leaders, will *“yes you to death”* as a way to appear polite, accommodating and open-minded around women’s political participation issues. Unfortunately, most respondents say this comes with little substance, and the same men rarely support their words with action.

Political parties in Nepal exhibit little leadership renewal, are not transparent, and are considered deeply flawed. Respondents said:

*“Political parties are not internally democratic, there is no transparent decision-making or financial transparency, and the enforcement of party laws is weak.”* (Staff)

*“Political party leaders are all cut from the same demographic cloth [or] cookie cutter. Memberships of the parties may be slightly different, but their policies are all very similar.”* (External)

*“Most parties have a level of democracy but don’t practice it. They are not accountable to programs, policies or people. They are upper caste, and patriarchal. Women’s role in politics is powerful, but numerically very poor. The successful women belong to certain families who rebel against these customs, like political families. The women are more privileged than others. The leadership of the political parties has been discouraging. They deny women even though women may have more qualifications. The political party has accepted that women are needed, but then they are treated badly. The value system has to change. There are many qualified women but there’s no system to prove their worth like there is for men.”* (External)

Quotas help start a general integration of women into politics by creating new opportunities for their involvement. Not surprisingly, the political party resistance described earlier makes it difficult to maximize quota effectiveness. According to several respondents, a perception that seats are given to women weakens their credibility and further discourages parties from spending campaign money on women. One participant said that: *“Political parties assume they will lose with women, they only put women forward because they have to.”*

Interestingly, some comments indicated that women’s competitive potential is strong enough to intimidate men, who opt for supporting women candidates who appear the least competitively threatening. For the most part, male leaders manage their discomfort with women peers by ignoring them, or as some external respondents said:

*“Men have selective hearing, especially on ‘women’s issues’ like reproductive rights, land rights, and [similar issues].”*



*“[Women have a weak voice in political parties]; their voices are there, but they are not listened to. For example, all parties have women’s wings, but no one listens to them.”*

*“The parties aren’t positive toward women. The parties are inclusive, but still they’re not positive. They invite women, but they aren’t serious about them. They only accept women to meet the quota.”*

The creation of women’s wings within political parties is a double-edged sword: on one hand, it creates a place for women to strengthen their political voice and deepen their engagement within their party. On the other hand, male party leaders point to women’s wings as evidence of sufficient women’s participation in the party, while at the same time, altogether discounting their voices. Respondents indicated:

*“[Requirements also have] to be changed in the constitutions of the party, so it’s written that a certain percentage of women should participate. One party has a female leader, but the rest are male. However, she doesn’t rule. It’s only to show that a woman is chairperson. In other parties, women are well-represented but only as members. They have no power. In her party, only seven female members out of 65 participate. This is similar in other parties.” (Participant)*

*“All parties have women’s wings, but very few members, and no district level heads are women.” (Staff)*

*“[There are] no women leaders in parties. The ones that are there are often rubber stamps.” (External)*

The marginalization of women’s political party wings is a good example of how segregating by gender without integrating women into the power structure can marginalize women and actually work against progress for political equality.

Some respondents said that the same qualities that political parties sharply lack – namely democracy, transparency, and meritocracy – are precisely those needed for internal reform, particularly when it comes to advancing women. Continuing resistance to women’s integration among political parties is not only a difficulty for respondents; it poses a larger concern around Nepal’s ability to successfully adopt a democratic model. One participant said: *“Internal reform and women’s inclusion is essential [for creating] healthy parties.”*

Compared to political parties, women in CSOs tend to play stronger leadership roles and, in general, are doing a better job galvanizing support for a shared women’s agenda. Some respondents said that women in CSOs don’t want to get involved in politics because it’s considered dirty business. At the same time, other respondents perceived that CSOs themselves are partisan.

Several respondents point to the inclusion of youth leaders as key to long-term changes. Resistance among entrenched political leaders will take time to change. Younger leaders, on the other hand, represent a generation that may be more democratically inclined, and in turn, may be more likely to favor women’s political and social equality. An external respondent said: *“[The] younger generation of men realizes that if women don’t enter politics, no change will happen. But this only cerebral and not practical.”*

## **Economic Barriers Limit Women’s Political Life**

Economics play a critical role in the evolution of Nepal’s political transition toward democracy. Economic disenfranchisement and, more specifically, widespread poverty, plague Nepal. Respondents describe a heavily segregated culture of upper, middle and lower classes.

An elite political and economic landscape makes access to parties difficult for both men and women who are burdened by the economic hardships that exclude so many of them from political life. The inclusion of marginalized populations is generally considered of great importance among respondents. An external

respondent said that: *“Literacy and social and economic empowerment of marginalized [people] is needed to get people politically involved – and this goes for men, too.”*

Gender inequality only adds another layer of complexity to the equation. Men have an unquestionable financial advantage over women, thereby precluding women’s real political competition. Women’s entry into Nepal’s political arena, or, for that matter, into any other public sphere, requires economic resources they typically lack. A Constituent Assembly campaign was reported by some respondents to realistically require five million rupees, far beyond the legal limit of 500,000 rupees.<sup>13</sup>

Women not only lack financial resources of their own, they also lack access to resources at the most basic level. Most women have no source of income or income-generating activities and their parties generally refuse to fund them. Furthermore, women do not have fully entrenched property rights, so that even if they do have access to property, they do not have the right to a mortgage or to sell property to finance their campaigns, as is often the custom with male candidates.

Lacking both economic independence and political experience, women who do manage to successfully contest elections will likely operate far removed from budget committees or economic decision-making positions. Women’s political involvement, some respondents noted, is meaningless without some appropriations decision-making power. One external respondent made the point that political positions are not equal in terms of impact: *“Without political power, there is no [chance for] change for women; and women have to have control of budgets.”*

Although their political strides have been significant, real equality for women will only come with economic and social empowerment, as well as political empowerment. An external participant summarized the ingredients necessary for women to advance in politics and succeed in elections: *“money, muscle and power.”* A long history of patriarchy and discrimination makes *“money, muscle and power”* each a difficult element to achieve as women move painstakingly towards meaningful political engagement. The same participant mirrored the feelings of her peers when she said: *“Women cannot compete on any level with men in this regard.”*

## **A Valuable Resource for Women**

Among respondents, NDI is considered both an ally and key resource for democracy-building and women’s political empowerment. For women, whose lack of training and marginalized status has left them without the necessary skills-set to compete with men, NDI plays a vital role. NDI offers both personal and political resources previously unavailable to women and has brought necessary practical tools for women to begin to engage more fully in political leadership positions.

Several factors have contributed to the increased level of trust and reliance on NDI among women and the larger Nepalese citizenry. Multiparty work is critical, according to many respondents, who say one of NDI’s strengths is its ability to link women in CSOs, parliament and political parties seeking democracy through non-violent means, regardless of size or ideology, through its training.

Particularly notable is NDI’s efforts with political parties. Respondents across the board highlight the establishment of the Interparty Women’s Alliance (IPWA) among NDI’s greatest accomplishments. In March 2006, NDI helped a working group of women political leaders establish the IPWA in an effort to help tackle women’s inequality, especially related to political engagement. IPWA’s primary goal is to elevate women’s second class citizenship in political parties through policy reform.

Gender mainstreaming is a core objective of the Nepalese Parliament, and in 2007, a national quota reserving one-third of all government positions for women was implement. Subsequently, IPWA and NDI helped organize

<sup>13</sup> A Nepal political expert notes that this varies hugely from party to party; some parties do not require this level of personal financial investment, while others rely on candidates to fund their own races.

public protests insisting on fair representation of women in the Interim Constitution Drafting Committee (ICDC). This brought the appointment of four women to the committee.

Through its financial and technical support, NDI has helped IPWA form volunteer-led district level sub-committees for civic education campaigns. Committee members receive training and access to NDI resources, and the Institute continues to assist IPWA in helping women surmount political barriers and make advances across Nepal. Participants said:

*“NDI’s greatest contribution to women in politics in Nepal includes its training programs and establishment of the IPWA. IPWA was really groundbreaking in Asia for its grassroots reach and the way it works on a common women’s agenda without prompting from parties.”*

*“Because of NDI training, women are motivated to join politics. NDI supported the Interparty Women’s Alliance, and now women are united and political parties put effort into bringing women into politics because of NDI’s programs. There’s a good reputation about NDI training in parties; everyone loves to participate in programs.”*

NDI staff members describe IPWA as a key player in making real political changes that help women advance politically. The IPWA has helped women make tangible progress. Staff said:

*“NDI is assisting the Interparty Women’s Alliance in setting up regional offices to help women talk about issues and to share experiences and build common ground to strengthen role of women and increase communication between parties.”*

*“The Interparty Women’s Association rallied and protested (blocking the entrance to the main building) against the fact that no women were put on the committee and consequently got four seats of ten for them. Still, the men have the power. Even though men don’t want to change, they will have to eventually. It’s the same all over the world. They say only family connections will help women get into power. Instead, we need to look to see how many women are there and how to make everyone gender sensitive – both men and women. There’s a very long way to go.”*

NDI’s capacity to reach across categories – political, socio-economic, gender, ethnicity and age – make it an invaluable resource. NDI is said to have great success working with citizens at the grassroots level. In fact, grassroots engagement is an essential part of Nepal’s democratic success, particularly when it comes to engaging women starting with simply sparking their interest. Respondents, especially participants, describe tremendous personal gain as a result of NDI’s help. Respondents said:

*“I salute NDI’s program[s] at the grassroots level... Women were trained how to give speeches and make budgets and talk about their rights because of NDI. I became aware of many things and I, too, benefitted from the program. At the grassroots level, women elected leaders attended the programs but didn’t know about their own rights. After training, their eyes were open so they could fight for the rights of the people. If you visit the field, you’ll see with your own eyes the results.” (Participant)*

*“I now have the capacity to train at the grassroots level, through both the trainings I have attended and logistical and monetary support [brought by] NDI, through the Interparty Women’s Alliance.” (Participant)*

*“NDI helps impact party laws and grassroots efforts to do this; NDI builds capacity... and [helps push] party laws that makes it difficult for parties to deny women.” (Staff)*

*“NDI gives women great exposure to political processes and mechanisms, access to parties and leaders, training experience, and materials.” (Staff)*

NDI’s effectiveness has made it an organization with a broad cultural impact. Several respondents pointed to NDI as the first NGO to engage with political parties, and as part of this work helped put the 33 percent quota into place. Financially, NDI’s impact is critical. NDI bridges the divide among women, donors and across

political parties. At the same time, its holistic resources make it much more than just a financial resource for women. One participant said:

*“NDI thinks that women should be aware and active in politics. It is first an organization that is invested in the development of women in politics in Nepal. Some people think it’s a donor organization. Once people get involved, though, they know it as a helping organization.”*

NDI is applauded for its provision of a wide range of highly necessary skills among women interested in politics. Specifically, respondents pointed to NDI’s political party work, election work, surveys, training, and funding avenues. An external respondent said:

*“Before the training by NDI, the women didn’t have a role in politics. After the training, they knew their rights and how to talk in front of male leaders and the public. It helped build their personality and they increased their leadership quality. Prior to the training, the women didn’t know these things.”*

The dissemination of educational materials and networking skills are among NDI’s greatest contributions, including teaching women to work together and within and across party lines, giving them a clear advantage over men who in-fight in political parties.

The political tools NDI provides women have helped them enter the political sphere and sustain a political foothold. But NDI’s impact has also been cultural and personal. Participants emphasize changes in how they see themselves, largely as a result of engagement with NDI’s programs. They said:

*“I have been inspired by NDI. I took a one-week training...now I am much more confident.”*

*“You can see the progression of certain women we worked with early on.”*

*“NDI helps bring women into the political mainstream [and it is] a good friend to women, where you can share your grief and problems, have opportunities and learn how to use your energy. NDI helps to give you more legitimacy within your party.”*

NDI is much more than just a practical resource; it is a personal resource and a valued friend, able to have a cumulative impact for women.

## **Inclusion in Nepal’s Constitution is Critical for Women**

The inclusion of women in drafting laws and more specifically, engaging in Nepal’s constitution drafting process, will greatly facilitate and have a long-term impact for women’s meaningful integration into Nepal’s social, economic and political spheres. While a sense of hope drives respondent attitudes, for some, a history of upheaval makes this process feel uncertain. Participants said:

*“[We need] international pressure to address women’s issues in the constitution making process. It’s a onetime process and if they lose this window it’s lost.”*

*“In the future, it’s uncertain what women’s political presence will be, but women should work hard in the future because society is dominated by males. Only males make decisions; they don’t provide rights for women so women need to do it for themselves... Women need to write in the constitution about women’s rights. Women also need to lobby the parties to give women their rights overall (not just political).”*

Most respondents say involving as many women as possible in the constitution drafting process will have long-term consequences, and help shape the movement toward gender equality by including women’s rights and concerns in the new constitution.

## Conclusion

While Nepal's research findings demonstrate the hope for democracy and political progress for women among respondents, these women also wrestle with a continuing history of male dominance and cultural resistance to women in the public sphere, particularly political leadership roles.

Respondents look to NDI as a facilitator amidst conflict, for training to build capacity, and for knowledge. They look to NDI for learning and to continue providing support in strengthening women's confidence in their leadership skills and abilities.

The best version of the future for women's political participation would mean equal rights, and in the future, respondents would like to see more women at the policy-making level and women in the highest levels of government. For respondents, this means creating more women's caucuses on a variety of issues, a zipper-type candidate list, gender parity in parliament, and 50 percent of women in all government and political party decision-making positions. Respondents would also like to see a woman president and prime minister. Respondents said:

*"[In ten years I'd like to see] a law that says if man is one then women is two on the list and vice versa in all political positions."* (External)

*"If things continue as they are and the 33 percent clause is implemented, women will be more empowered. But larger-scale change in women's status and social-cultural change will take a long time."* (Participant)

*"Ten years from now, I'd like to see 25 to 30 percent of women active in politics at all levels – local and central – and to see them with a strong voice."* (Staff)

NDI's work with women is a critical element in its democracy-building in Nepal. In part as a result of the Institute's ongoing efforts, society is gradually calling for women's inclusion in the public sphere, creating the impetus for gains in women's political engagement and momentum for women's equality.

Despite hurdles and instability, democratic interest is stirring in Nepal. For women, the new constitution, coupled with resources like NDI, not only means keeping their foot in the door, but also that great opportunity may lie ahead. Respondents are hopeful that time will bring more political engagement by women, and with it, a stronger voice and real political power.



# VIII. APPENDICES: INTERVIEW GUIDELINES

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## NDI Staff Guidelines

### I. Introduction (3 minutes)

#### 1. Moderator Introduction.

- Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today.
- Brief Explanation of Process.
- Background on assessment project.
- Opportunity to share personal stories related to your experience with NDI's efforts to increase women's political participation in this country.
- 45 to 60 minutes
- All of our conversation will remain anonymous and confidential
- There are no right or wrong answers; this is not an evaluation.

#### 2. Participant introduction.

- Tell me a little bit about your relationship with NDI programs/staff (how involved, for how long, etc).

### II. Landscape (5 minutes)

1. Let's start broadly and briefly. How would you say things are going in [country of study] generally? Are things moving in the right direction? Or the wrong direction? **Interviewer: See where they start, then explore positives and negatives.**

2. What, if any, are 1 or 2 of the biggest changes you have seen in [country of study] over the past 10 to 15 years? **Probe for political changes.**

### III. Women in Politics (10 minutes)

1. How would you describe [country of study]'s political parties? What about when it comes to women in politics – are political parties active in recruiting women to participate in politics? **Explore for detail.**

- What, if anything, makes women as appealing, or perhaps more appealing, than their male counterparts as an asset to their party?

2. What is likely to have the greatest impact on women's political participation or representation? **Probe for: party structure, policies, degree of centralization, quotas, hierarchy, partnerships, placement on the party list.**

3. Generally, would you say women in [country of study] have a voice in politics? Why/why not? Can you give me some examples of where women are heard the most? And heard the least? **Probe for: political parties, campaigning, networking, issue-specific, regional and other.**

## VI. NDI Impact (10 - 15 minutes)

1. Please tell me about NDI's programs or initiatives in [country of study] (both standalone and mainstream) that have worked to increase women's political participation. (Be sure to get info on all types of women's programs and when they were implemented)

- **BRIEF.** Let's talk about NDI and its efforts. Imagine you are talking with a young woman and she's interested in getting politically involved but she's never heard of NDI. How would you describe NDI to her?

2. What, if anything, is NDI known for?

3. How can NDI help increase a woman's political involvement or her decision to run for office?

- What needs to be in place for political parties to be more likely to advance a woman into a leadership position?

4. How would you describe the impact of NDI's efforts to train and empower women in politics in [country of study]? **Probe for successes, positives and challenges, disappointments; encourage stories.**

## V. Moving Ahead: Best Practices (35 minutes)

1. If you could do anything over what would you do differently (i.e. what should be left behind)? What would you do the same (i.e. Or what would you take forward?)

2. Have you seen any differences when it comes to NDI's program structures such as it's standalone versus mainstreaming approaches? [*Standalone* programs being exclusively focused on women and *mainstreamed* being components of larger non-women-specific programs that focus on women].

3. What would things have to look like for NDI's women's political participation efforts to be considered "top notch"? **Probe for program structures, including standalone vs. mainstreaming approaches.** If they are having difficulty answering the question, ask:

- What components/conditions/resources (human and financial) must be in place for success?

4. In general, what is NDI's *greatest contribution* to women in politics in [country of study]?

**Probe only if needed – if respondent if having difficulty answering question:**

- Structural, organizational, models, other?
- Concentrated in politics?
- Contributing to shifting cultural challenges or obstacles? Why/why not?

5. Think about your own experience in this process. How would you describe your experience working with NDI? **Probe for stories.**

6. Imagine it's ten years from now, and we're doing the same interview. Give me a realistic description of women's roles in politics.

- How would this conversation be different? The same?
- What would have contributed to changes?
- Would NDI have been a driving force for major strides in women's roles in politics?  
Why or why not?

End of interview. Thank you very much.



# NDI Women’s Political Party Program Participant Guidelines

## I. Introduction (3 minutes)

### 1. Moderator Introduction.

- Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today.
- Brief Explanation of Process.
- Background on assessment project.
- Opportunity to share personal stories related to your experience with NDI’s efforts to increase women’s political participation in this country.
- 45 to 60 minutes
- All of our conversation will remain anonymous and confidential
- There are no right or wrong answers; this is not an evaluation.

### 2. Participant introduction.

- Tell me a little bit about your relationship with NDI programs/staff (how involved, for how long, etc).

## II. Landscape (5 minutes)

1. Let’s start broadly. Do you think things are generally moving in the right direction in [country of study]? **Interviewer: See where they start, then explore positives and negatives.**

2. What, if any, are 1 or 2 of the biggest changes you have seen in [country of study] over the past 10 to 15 years? **Probe for political changes.**

## III. Women in Politics (10 minutes)

1. How would you describe [country of study] ’s political parties? What about when it comes to women in politics – are political parties active in recruiting women to participate in politics? **Explore for detail.**

- What, if anything, makes women as appealing, or perhaps more appealing, than their male counterparts as an asset to their party?

2. How can NDI help increase a woman’s political involvement or her decision to run for office?

- What needs to be in place for political parties to be more likely to advance a woman into a leadership position?

3. What is likely to have the greatest impact on women’s political participation or representation? **Probe for: party structure, policies, degree of centralization, quotas, hierarchy, partnerships, placement on the party list.**

4. Generally, would you say women in [country of study] have a voice in politics? Why/why not? Can you give me some examples of where women are heard the most? And heard the least? **Probe for: political parties, campaigning, networking, issue-specific, regional and other.**

#### IV. NDI Impact (10 – 15 minutes)

1. **BRIEF.** Let's talk about NDI and its efforts. Imagine you are talking with a young woman and she's interested in getting politically involved but she's never heard of NDI. How would you describe NDI to her?

- What, if anything, is NDI known for?

2. How would you describe the impact of NDI's efforts to train and empower women in politics in [country of study]? **Probe for successes, positives and challenges, disappointments; encourage stories.**

#### V. Moving Ahead: Best Practices (35 minutes)

1. In your experience with NDI, how have you benefited most?

2. What would things have to look like for NDI's women's political participation efforts to be considered "top notch" [alternatives: right on track, really right/good]? **Probe for program structures, including standalone vs. mainstreaming approaches.** If they are having difficulty answering the question, ask:

- What components/conditions/resources (human and financial) must be in place for success?

3. In general, what is NDI's *greatest contribution* to women in politics in [country of study]? **Probe ONLY if needed – if respondent if having difficulty answering question:**

- Structural, organizational, models, other?
- Contributing to shifting cultural challenges or obstacles? Why/why not?

4. We've talked a lot about women in politics during this interview. Taking a step back, tell me: do you see women's political presence in [country of study] changing over time? Why/why not? How?

End of interview. Thank you very much.

# Externals: Political, Academic, and Civil Society Leaders' Guidelines

## I. Introduction (3 minutes)

1. Moderator Introduction.
2. Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today.
3. Brief Explanation of Process
  - Overview of assessment
  - Opportunity to share your views – and any stories – related to [country of study]
  - 45 to 60 minutes
  - All of our conversation will remain anonymous and confidential
  - There are no right or wrong answers;
4. Respondent introduction.
  - Tell me a little bit about your political and professional background and responsibilities (how & with who involved, for how long, etc)

## II. Landscape (5 minutes – BRIEF)

1. Let's start broadly. How would you say things are going in [country of study] generally? Are things moving in the right direction? Or the wrong direction? **Interviewer: See where they start, then explore positives and negatives.**
2. Where, if at all, have you seen the most political change take place?

## III. Women's Political Participation (20 minutes)

1. How would you describe [country of study]'s political parties?
2. Generally, how would you describe women's roles in politics here in [country of study]?
3. What about when it comes to women in politics – are political parties active in recruiting women to participate in politics? **Explore for detail.**
  - Is there resistance to having more women in political leadership roles?
  - What, if anything, makes women as appealing, or perhaps more appealing, than their male counterparts as an asset to their party?
4. Generally, would you say women in [country of study] have a voice in politics? Why or why not? Can you give me some examples of where women are heard the most? And heard the least? **Probe for: political parties, campaigning, networking, issue-specific, regional and other.**
5. What is likely to have the greatest impact on women's political participation or representation? **Probe for: party org, structure, quotas, reliance on males, hierarchy, and factions.**

## IV. NDI Impact (30 minutes)

1. **BRIEF.** I'd like to talk a bit about the National Democratic Institute and its efforts. **[If respondent's knowledge or familiarity with NDI is unclear, ask: "How familiar are you with NDI?" ]** [Note: This/how much respondent knows about NDI will determine how we continue.]

- What, in your opinion, would be the fairest description or account of NDI and its efforts here in [country of study]?
- What, if anything, is NDI known for?

2. **BRIEF.** Let's talk about NDI and its efforts. Imagine you are talking with a young woman and she's interested in getting politically involved but she's never heard of NDI. How would you describe NDI to her?

- What, if anything, is NDI known for?

3. How can NDI help increase a woman's political involvement or her decision to run for office?

- What needs to be in place for political parties to be more likely to advance a woman into a leadership position?

4. How would you describe the impact of NDI's efforts to train and empower women in politics in [country of study]? **Probe for successes, positives and challenges, disappointments; encourage stories.**

- In your opinion, has NDI been successful in integrating and engaging women in politics?

5. In general, what is NDI's *greatest contribution* to women in politics in [country of study] ?

**Probe ONLY if needed – if respondent if having difficulty answering question:**

- Structural, organizational, models, other?
- Contributing to shifting cultural challenges or obstacles? Why/why not?

## V. Moving Ahead: Best Practices (8 minutes)

1. As you look at [country of study]'s political landscape, what would you advise NDI to keep in mind? What direction should they head in?

2. **BRIEF.** What would things have to look like for NDI's women's political participation efforts to be considered "top notch"?

3. We've talked a lot about women in politics during this interview. Taking a step back, tell me: do you see women's political presence in [country of study] changing over time? Why/why not? How?

- What components/conditions/resources (human and financial) must be in place for success?

4. Would NDI have played a role in this? (**If yes:** How? **If no:** Why not?)

End of interview. Thank you very much.



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