

# WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN LIBYA QUOTAS AS A KEY STRATEGY FOR STATES IN TRANSITION

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# Women's Political Participation in the Gaddafi Era

- Lack of Political Space
- Negative Portrayals of Women in Public Life
  - ▣ “Women holding positions in the Gaddafi government had been chosen not for their qualifications but as an expression of Gaddafi’s personal interests.”
    - Women’s rights activist Amena Raghei



# Women and the Revolution

- “Women have done a lot in the revolution, so we must be part of rebuilding Libya.”  
-NDI focus group participant
- Opportunity to meaningfully contribute
- Positive examples of women’s leadership.



# Treatment of Women in the Wake of the Revolution



- Increased Women's Activism
- Unofficial quota of 2
  - ▣ “They did not want to listen to anything I had to say. They just wanted a woman to stand there and smile in the pictures.”

-Salwa Boughaigis,  
Former NTC  
Representative

# Attitudes Towards Women's Political Participation



- “Women’s decisions are affected by their feelings, no matter how strong they are”
- “If the woman and man have the same qualifications I will vote for the man, because the woman will have other responsibilities such as raising children.”

-NDI Focus Group participants

# Initial Quota and Response

- January 7, 2011: “... a ten percent quota of the total number of members of Congress is reserved for women, unless the number of women candidates does not reach the ten percent quota.”



# Revised Electoral Law

- February, 2011: Article 15 adopted a closed-list zipper system, requiring political parties to alternate genders on their candidate lists and to place a woman candidate at the top of half of their lists.
- Learning from Tunisia, the Libyan quota required both **horizontal and vertical zippering**, but only applied to political parties; 80 of 200 seats.

# Outcome of the Quota

- Most parties complied with the regulations, putting women in the unprecedented position of being sought after by political parties.
- **559 women stood as candidates on political party lists**, compared to 711 men. Of the 2,501 candidates who contested individual seats, only 88 were women.
- **33 women were elected**, 32 winning on party lists and one independent candidate. Women comprise **16.5 percent** of the GNC's membership.



# Lessons Learned

- Both party-affiliated and independent women candidates faced additional campaign challenges.
- “The zipper list... has definitely contributed in increasing women’s representation.”  
-Amina Megheirbi, GNC member



# Moving Forward

- Women in the GNC
- Constitutional Debate
  - ▣ “We fought so hard for the quota, to make sure we would be at the table to write the constitution and now they have taken this away from us.”
    - Committee to Support Women’s Participation in Decision-Making
- Fear of Backsliding

