

## **Final Report**

### **Kenya: Supporting Women's Political Participation**

NED Core Grant 95-74 (0505)

#### **I. SUMMARY**

In contrast to the National Democratic Institute's (NDI) 1994 program conducted solely in partnership with the Education Centre for Women in Democracy (ECWD), NDI's 1995 programming was broadened and conducted with the assistance and cooperation of eight indigenous organizations.

In order to determine specific 1995 programming in Kenya, NDI conducted individual interviews as well as focus groups to bring together academics from the University of Nairobi, gender scholars, journalist, gender trainers and researchers, many of whom had been participants in NDI programs in previous years. In response to this research, NDI held five seminar throughout 1995. Each of the sessions took place six to eight weeks apart in Nairobi. The focus of these seminars included: challenges to women's political participation; campaign planning; voter contact; fundraising in an African context; media relations; and advocacy. They resulted in the development of a skilled core group of approximately 100 Kenyan women interested and committed to either running for office or working on behalf of women candidates.

#### **II. BACKGROUND**

Considerable cultural and social barriers still impede Kenyan women's participation in the political process. In addition, some sectors of the women's movement suffer from a lack of unity. The political climate has fostered suspicion and distrust among many organizations, discouraging open discussion and coordination. As a result, many women leaders are forced to stand alone on the political front, without the support of their parties or of one another. Women in elective office must conduct research, draft bills and carry out other legislative activities on their own. Thus, women have little time to participate as full members of or contribute to the development of women's organizations.

Kenyan women are reported to comprise between 52 percent and 60 percent of the country's registered voters and consistently have a higher voter turnout than men; but they are represented in very limited numbers as elected officials. From the time of independence in 1963 to 1969, no women were elected to parliament. Between 1969 and 1974, women constituted less than 1 percent of the elected members of parliament. The highest number of women who served in parliament was reached in 1979, when there were five elected and one appointed female member. In 1983, only two women were elected and one was appointed; the same was true from 1988 to 1992, when women represented only 3 percent of all parliamentarians. In the multiparty

elections of December 1992, six women were elected to parliament -- three from the Democratic Party, one from FORD-Kenya, one from FORD-Asili and one from the ruling party, KANU. In that year of democratization, no women were nominated to any of the appointed seats in parliament.

The barriers that limit women's full political participation remain. Some of these barriers are cultural or traditional; others are a function of political party organization; and some are engendered by the lack of technical or other resources available to women who seek increased involvement in politics. Until 1995, no woman had ever served as cabinet minister,<sup>1</sup> largely because cabinet members are selected from within parliament. Before 1995, the highest position ever held by a woman was that of assistant minister. The situation is similar in local political bodies, where women are substantially under-represented in elected and appointed positions. In 1995, President Moi also appointed a woman to one of the 12 constitutionally allocated seats he selects for Parliament. This brought the number of women in Parliament to seven.

Following seriously flawed multiparty elections in Kenya in 1992, many challenges to democracy remain. Political organizers, including opposition party organizers, journalists and civic activists, face an often hostile environment in which to express their views. Despite this oppressive political environment, women have been able to operate more freely during this period than before and have the potential, in part because of their lack of affiliation with the old political order, to act as a positive political force.

Convinced that Kenyan women represent a largely untapped source for political change, NDI co-sponsored an October 1993 conference in Kenya entitled "Women in Political Leadership" which was co-sponsored by the Education Centre for Women in Democracy, a local multipartisan NGO. Based on the interest generated by the conference, NDI decided to continue to promote women's political development in Kenya. NDI subsequently received a grant from the National Endowment for Democracy in 1994 for a seven-month program to provide financial and technical assistance to the ECWD to conduct a series of leadership training seminars for women throughout Kenya, and to create a network of political activists, providing an exchange of information and ideas and organizing support for their efforts. This network was to serve as a basis for a long-term, nationwide civic education program.

NDI officially established a field office in Nairobi in May 1994, formally initiating its work in promoting the participation of women in politics in Kenya with the ECWD. During this collaboration, it became apparent that a significant gap in expectations existed between the two organizations relative to the scope and direction of this partnership. In December, when it became clear that serious differences remained, NDI terminated the cooperative agreement.

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<sup>1</sup>President Moi appointed the only female KANU MP as the Minister of Culture and Social Services in August 1995.

### **III. 1995 NDI ACTIVITY IN KENYA**

In 1995, NDI returned to Kenya without a cooperative relationship with any indigenous Kenyan organization. Building on previously established relationships, however, NDI designed its program with the advice and implementation assistance of a coalition of eight Kenyan organizations: the League of Kenyan Women Voters (LWV), Gender Sensitive Initiatives (GSI), National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW), the Democratic Foundation (DF), National Commission on Women and Children (NCWAC), Institute for Education and Democracy (IED), the International Federation of Lawyers (FIDA) and the Gender Center (GC).

In spring 1995, NDI conducted an in-country assessment of the political context and realities of program implementation. The purpose of this assessment was to develop a curriculum for the five planned training sessions. NDI interviewed over 20 prominent political women who were heads of NGOs, former appointed or elected officials, 1992 women candidates, women activists, women elected officials and women in political parties.

These politically active women completed three-page questionnaires and spoke individually with NDI representatives. NDI also conducted a "focus group" of individuals associated with the University of Nairobi including social science scholars, journalists, gender trainers and researchers. Through this process, NDI attempted to determine the utility of the program and refine the program implementation. This assessment was essential to the design of the program. In addition, NDI identified approximately 100 program participants, of which 60 percent were to receive training as candidates and the remaining 40 percent as staff support. This percentage remained the same based on the information gained in the assessment process, although NDI encouraged men to participate in the second track of training.

NDI held five three-and-one-half-day seminars throughout the year. Each of the sessions took place six to eight weeks apart. The seminars focused on challenges to women's political participation and campaign planning, voter contact, democracy education, media relations and advocacy.

From June 25 to 28, NDI conducted the first in these seminars. Approximately 55 participants, drawn from female MPs, parliamentary candidates, local council officials and candidates, attended the initial seminar in Nairobi. Plenary subjects addressed the role of women and social/cultural challenges to their political empowerment, community/grassroots organizing, party manifestos, the role of government institutions in the electoral process, developing responsible citizenship, and life as an elected woman official.

From August 17 to 20, NDI conducted a workshop for potential campaign staff and assistants to candidates. Most of the approximately 25 participants were individuals who represented organizations and backgrounds which had not previously been directly engaged in the political process. Workshop sessions included small group exercises and scenarios on the

following subjects: campaign planning, researching constituency needs, a review of experiences of women candidates in the 1992 general elections, the structure of the Kenyan government, and identifying organizations prepared to assist in women's empowerment.

An additional seminar for potential women political candidates was conducted from September 21 to 24. Approximately 25 women attended. This seminar focused on the legislative and electoral process. For this, NDI brought in women from Ethiopia, Zambia and Uganda for a comparative analysis exercise for the four countries.

From October 12 to 16, NDI conducted a second workshop for potential women campaign staff. The workshop focused on institutional barriers to women's participation on civic education and institutional challenges to women's participation. Approximately 50 participants attended.

The final event in this 1995 series was held from November 16 to 19. This seminar succeeded in bringing together the two tracks of potential women candidates and potential campaign staff. Approximately 75 people attended. Agenda topics included advocacy and media relations. In addition, some of the women who had attended the United Nations seminar on Women's Rights in Beijing discussed their experiences and forward-looking strategies.

#### **IV. ASSESSMENT**

NDI's 1995 program succeeded in developing a core group of Kenyan women determined to seek greater participation in the political process. In some cases these individuals did not know each other prior to the beginning of the program; in all cases participants indicated that the technical information gained as a result of the seminars was highly useful, especially advice on the development of campaign plans. This successful series of multipartisan seminars is an almost unprecedented event in Kenya's highly partisan political environment.

More important than the provision of specific information, however, was the sense of solidarity which developed among many members of the group, and the development of a common attitude that by working together they could have an impact. This attitude was facilitated by NDI's field representative, but it was essentially a dynamic which developed among the participants themselves. For example, participants, even from different political parties, discussed ways they could help support each other in their campaigns, both in material and other terms.

An independent evaluation was conducted of the 1995 program by a Kenyan consultant experienced in evaluations. The consultant's evaluation noted that "the project made qualitative short-term impact" in that: a) a number of women decided to run for office as a result of the program; b) women began to develop campaign programs that they would not otherwise have

been exposed to; and c) a spin-off result occurred, with participants planning to further disseminate information gained through the seminars. The evaluation also strongly urged that NDI build on its in-country track record, and develop further programming.

After the completion of the 1995 series of seminars, NDI, in association with its coalition partners and other women activists, participated in a three-day retreat which resulted in the formation of a Kenyan organization named FREDa (Friends of Esther and Debra). FREDa is an outgrowth of NDI's association with the founders of this organization over the last two years. At the end of 1995, NDI, in partnership with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, worked with this organization to help facilitate its efforts to clarify its identity and mission -- i.e., a think tank with the primary focus of assisting women in the area of political empowerment. In 1996, NDI began to further strengthen this partnership by working more closely with its Kenyan partner organizations and to conduct political participation training at the grassroots level outside of Nairobi.

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\* The report for the third seminar (for potential candidates), conducted September 21-24, 1996, is not in circulation

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## **Appendix 1**