

NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE



Burkina Faso

Political Context

November 29, 2015 was a historic day for Burkina Faso, as the freest, fairest and most competitive presidential and legislative elections in the country's history took place. The Independent National Electoral Commission administered the polls in a transparent and professional manner and used new technology to transmit, process and announce election results within 24 hours; poll workers were well-trained and knowledgeable of voting procedures; voters cast their ballots peacefully; political parties and candidates had poll watchers in polling stations; and civil society organizations (CSOs) deployed thousands of citizen observers across the country to monitor the polls, widely viewed as credible and legitimate.

Roch Marc Christian Kaboré of the *Mouvement du peuple pour le progrès (MPP)* was elected president, with the runner-up promptly conceding defeat and congratulating Kaboré. His election signifies the first time Burkina Faso has seen power pass from one civilian-led government to another. It was also the country's first election free from interference by the incumbent government; the transitional government, in place since ex-President Blaise Compaoré fell from power in October 2014, did not contest the results. The elections also ushered in a parliament with many first-time representatives, in which the MPP won 55 of the 127 seats, the presidential runner-up's party, *Union pour le progrès et le changement*, earned 33 seats, Compaoré's former party, *Congrès pour la démocratie et le progrès*, won 18 seats and the remaining 21 were split among several smaller parties. Elections, scheduled for May 22, 2016, will elect councilors at the commune level, who will then vote from among their ranks to elect mayors.

Empowering Civil Society to Participate Effectively in the 2015 and 2016 Polls

On November 29, NDI supported civil society to undertake two complementary, nationwide election monitoring initiatives. NDI supported partner RESOCIDE, a network of more than 35 CSOs, to organize and carry out an election observation mission through a larger coalition known as ICODE. A total of 1,048 ICODE observers were deployed to 302 communes across Burkina Faso to monitor whether polling places opened on time, campaign materials were displayed, the secrecy of the vote was respected, polling stations were adequately staffed, and ballots were counted in a fair and open manner.



Burkinabe women learn online tools that can help them run for office.

Working in concert with organizations Diakonia and One World, NDI provided assistance to the *Convention des organisations de la société civile pour l'observation des élections domestiques (CODEL)* to implement a pilot parallel vote tabulation (PVT) on election day. PVT is a proven, statistically-based methodology employed by citizen election observers around the world to independently verify election results and to provide trustworthy information on the quality of election day processes. CODEL deployed 251 observers to monitor a representative, random sample of polling stations across Burkina and an additional 5,750 observers across the country on election day as non-statistical observers.

NDI will continue to support partner CSOs' voter mobilization, education and awareness-raising activities across the country in the lead-up to the municipal elections.

Strengthening Political Parties

In the months leading up to the landmark 2015 elections, NDI in Burkina Faso worked with members of parties from across the political spectrum to train their members as poll watchers on election day. These trainers delivered subsequent trainings on which material resources and personnel are needed to run a data center, how to use information and communications technology in communicating observers' data via a chain of communication, and how to collect and analyze data using multiple platforms. A total of 73,944 poll watchers from 12 parties were trained, and parties succeeded in deploying 68,602 to monitor and observe the November 29 polls. NDI met with party leaders to debrief on



Women queue at an NDI-organized opportunity to receive copies of their birth certificates, a document necessary for voter registration.

the process, reflect on lessons learned, and collect and analyze data following the elections.

In early 2015, NDI held focus groups with citizens across the country to publish a study on citizens' public policy concerns and priorities. For parties' platforms to better reflect these concerns, NDI consulted with party leaders on how to use findings from this study. The Institute also provided guidance on incorporating citizens' priorities into the parties' policy positions and campaign messages. In the post-election period, NDI analyzed the extent to which the focus group study findings were used in parties' campaign messages and during public discussions of party platforms. Youth unemployment, livelihoods and skills training, access to healthcare, and women's rights all emerged as key social issues in parties' messages— issues that were also recurring themes in NDI's focus group study.

Enhancing Women and Youth Political Participation

Enhancing the capacity of women and youth to advocate and engage directly with political party leadership and assume leadership positions themselves, is a central theme of NDI's work in Burkina Faso. To ensure that politicians hear about the issues that affect youth, NDI helped youth CSOs develop and strengthen their advocacy skills. This collaboration resulted in "Youth Appeal for Political Renewal in Burkina Faso," an advocacy document which outlines the importance of healthcare, good governance, youth employment, and human rights. Seven parties took part in the discussions.

To increase the number of women candidates nominated by their parties and the number of women elected to public office, NDI has supported local partners, including the Council of Burk-

inabe Women (*Conseil des Femmes du Burkina, CFB*). The CFB organized awareness-raising sessions to promote adherence to the 2009 quota law. NDI trained a total of 379 prospective female candidates, of which 110 were subsequently nominated and 13 were ultimately elected after being placed at competitive positions on the party's candidate lists. Following the elections, the CFB released a report entitled "Gender Analysis of the Legislative Elections of November 29, 2015." The CFB continues to conduct advocacy with the National Assembly, focusing on the committee which promotes women's rights and economic development.

With NDI's support, five Burkinabe CSOs conducted a diverse array of citizen outreach and engagement activities. They started early in the lead-up to the elections, so as to engage women and mobilize youth to participate peacefully in the elections. Partners then carried intensive voter education campaigns in the immediate pre-election period in 2015, before turning to similar activities tailored to the context of the 2016 municipal elections. One of these partners, the *Coalition Burkinabé pour les Droits de la Femme* (Burkina Faso Coalition for Women's Rights, CBDF) organized workshops for candidates to share their visions for Burkina Faso and hone their proposals for social initiatives to ensure and promote women's rights and physical and economic security. Subsequent radio broadcasts of these candidates' societal visions helped promote women's rights, which informed political parties and motivated candidates. CBDF also organized a forum for women leaders who advocate for full adoption of the gender quota law by the government and political parties. in and near Ouagadougou, Bobo-Dioulasso, and Fada N'Gourma NDI has partnered with youth-led CSOs to educate young adults and women, who in the past have been excluded from the electoral process, on their potential to contribute to peaceful elections. This programming reached diverse communities across the country. The CSOs helped women in rural areas register for birth certificates in order to join the electoral roll, held talks with

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men on women's right to vote freely, and conducted awareness-raising walk-about in markets to spread information to youth and answer their questions. In 2016, these CSOs have continued to build their organizational capacity using a tailor-made approach based on the results of a self-assessment undertaken by each organization with NDI guidance.

In the lead-up to the May 2016 municipal elections, NDI is conducting training for women and youth candidates to bolster their communication, campaigning and organizing skills. The goal is to ensure that the youth and women wings of political parties wield greater leverage within their party, resulting in a more systematic advancement of their common priorities. NDI aims to build their skills and increase cross-party exchanges, as well as strengthen information-sharing and cooperation between parties' national and local youth and women wings. Once local councilors and mayors have been elected, NDI will provide capacity building trainings to women and youth in these posts, organize community-level discussion forums, and promote community development initiatives.

Working to Strengthen the Newly-Elected National Assembly

Given the high proportion of first-time parliamentarians in the National Assembly, NDI will undertake an institutional assessment of needs and capacities in order to develop, together with parliamentarians and staff, a legislative development plan. NDI will provide technical assistance to three committees, those responsible for promoting good governance and human rights, sustainable development, and budgeting and finance. NDI will also assist up to three legislative networks within the new National Assembly, focusing on specific policy reform priorities, such as anti-corruption and fiscal responsibility, youth empowerment, and gender equality. In partnership with Internews, the program will provide training and guidance to enable key media outlets to provide balanced, informed, and accurate reporting on legislative affairs. Civil society organizations will receive training and assistance to monitor legislative activities, including proposed legislation and discussions on the issues on which civil society advocates.

Improving Democratic Governance of the Security Sector in the Sahel

In Burkina Faso, as well as in Mali and Niger, NDI and the Center for Democratic Control of the Armed Forces (DCAF) are implementing a pilot program to strengthen democratic control and oversight of the security sector. Core partners are drawn from the

legislature, civil society, and the executive branch. They include members of the parliamentary commission responsible for security sector oversight, local civil society organizations able to play a "watchdog" role, and the ministry in charge of defense and security. NDI and DCAF seek strengthen existing laws and instill a greater sense of accountability by empowering partners from across society and government to strengthen existing laws and instill a greater sense of accountability.

Funding

NDI's programs in Burkina Faso would not be possible without the support of donors like the Royal Danish Embassy, the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Embassy of the Republic of China (Taiwan), the National Endowment for Democracy, the United States Agency for International Development, the U.S. Department of State, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

Past Programs: Supporting Women Leaders

NDI's five-year program helped women leaders advocate more effectively for women's rights, poverty reduction, and good governance. In one initiative, NDI supported a coalition of women's organizations monitoring the implementation of the international Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). In 2009, the coalition produced and submitted its first report to the UN committee considering implementation of CEDAW. The "shadow report" – an alternative to the government's official report – is an advocacy tool the coalition can use to hold the Burkinabe government accountable for the implementation of CEDAW. The coalition will complete its second shadow report in 2014. In another initiative, NDI supported local partners to mobilize women and men in the community to advocate for improvements to their local health and education services.

Ahead of the 2012 legislative and local elections, NDI worked to help women who aspired to national or local office become viable candidates, and worked with women candidates on how to run a winning campaign. That year, twenty-four women were elected to parliament, encompassing 18.9 percent of the National Assembly. NDI is now working with the members of parliament and local council members to support them as they promote and protect women's rights, improve social services, and increase the transparency and responsiveness of governing institutions.

Engaging Youth in the Political Process Improving Electoral Processes

To help youth engage peacefully in politics following the 2012 local and legislative elections, NDI implemented a one-year young leaders program in September of that year. Working with young people from civil society and the major political parties, NDI assisted youth to strengthen their leadership, organization, and communication skills. This training enabled them to participate constructively in the elections and to continue in the post-election period as an active and positive political force. In collaboration with political party leaders, NDI conducted trainings in Ouagadougou, Bobo Dioulasso, and Fada N’Gourma to assist young political party members to take on greater leadership roles. The Institute also worked with civil society youth organizations to help young leaders learn to work collectively as effective organizers, civic educators, and advocates for youth priorities.

Combating Corruption

To help MPs combat corruption and exercise closer budget oversight, a U.S.A.I.D.-funded NDI program assisted Burkindi, a multi-party, anti-corruption legislative network, and members of the National Assembly’s budget committee, as they combated corruption. Through 2011 and 2012, NDI and Burkindi arranged for MPs and parliamentary staff to visit a gold mining site to assess its economic and environmental impact. NDI and Burkindi also organized a visit to the border town of Dakola, where MPs and parliamentary staff met the security officers in charge of border patrol and the leaders of the customs department to evaluate their anti-corruption and transparency measures. NDI also helped Burkindi members draft an anti-corruption bill, which passed in 2013 and addresses the shortcomings in the legal framework to fight corruption in Burkina Faso.

Political Party Strengthening

NDI conducted a USAID-funded program in 2009-2011 to strengthen political parties’ internal communications and strategic planning processes, with the aim of improving their participation in local government. NDI also trained party poll-watcher master trainers for the November 2010 presidential election and assisted parties in developing pollwatching operational plans ahead of the local and legislative elections. To enhance Burkinabe political parties’ inclusiveness and engagement with citizens, NDI conducted a program funded by the Embassy of the Netherlands in 2009-2011. Through this program, parties developed policies that address citizens’ needs, strengthen parties’ external communication skills, and empower young women to more effectively engage in politics.

In an effort to boost citizen participation in future elections, the Institute conducted a review of the causes of low voter registration ahead of the presidential vote. The review found that the overwhelming majority of both political party and civil society organization respondents believed voter apathy caused the low voter registration rate. NDI shared the findings and recommendations with representatives from the government, the election commission, and party and civic leaders to inform their discussions about reforming the voter registration process.

Ahead of legislative elections in 2002, NDI organized a study mission to Mauritius to help Burkinabe political leaders learn about the Mauritian democratic process and identify ways to create an environment more conducive to political competition. Upon their return to Ouagadougou, the Burkinabe delegation engaged in a roundtable discussion to build consensus for legislative elections.



*A woman places her ballot in the ballot box at a polling place monitored by ICODE observers on November 29, 2015.
Photo credit: ICODE Facebook page*

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