

North Macedonia: WoMen Lead
Advancing Gender Equality through Women's Political Participation

November 1, 2020 - June 30, 2023

Advancing gender equality is a central challenge in North Macedonia's democratic progress. Women in North Macedonia have limited access to decision-making power because they face individual, socio-cultural, and institutional barriers to political participation. Barriers to gender equality in decision-making include a lack of experience and skills among women politicians, institutional obstacles within political parties, parliament and government, persisting socio-cultural norms that reflect gender bias, and violence against women in politics (VAW-P). A more conducive environment for women's political participation would contribute to overall gender equality and increase the likelihood that more women would choose to participate in political life.

Funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and drawing on global and country-specific expertise in women's political participation, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) is launching WoMen Lead (#WoMenLead), an empowerment program to lower the individual, socio-cultural, and institutional barriers to women's political participation in North Macedonia. Through the program, NDI aims to improve gender equality in political parties, provide women candidates with the skills and a supportive environment to campaign successfully for and govern at the local level, and reduce violence against women in politics.

NDI will employ a three-pronged approach to increase women's meaningful and safe participation and representation in politics.

➤ First, NDI will engage political party leadership across the ideological spectrum. In coordination with party leadership, NDI will launch a Gender Equality Task Force to assess existing gender equality practices within political parties, and undertake activities to promote women's political participation and combat VAW-P. In consultation with the Task Force, NDI will offer capacity building training to emerging women and male leaders to foster talent within political parties. The training sessions will focus on inclusive policy development and leadership skills.

"So let me be clear: for women, violence is not a rightful or inevitable cost of participation in politics. Participation in politics is the way we end violence against women."

Madeleine K. Albright, NDI Chairman and
64th U.S. Secretary of State

➤ Second, as interventions at the subnational level are an investment in the future of women's political engagement nation-wide, NDI will provide targeted technical assistance to women candidates standing for municipal elected office. NDI will organize training sessions to build the skills and knowledge necessary to develop and execute a successful electoral campaign, and will create peer-support networks for women to stay connected during and after the election cycle. NDI will also deliver training on gender equality for male candidates who plan on running for municipal councils.

➤ Third, NDI will work with political parties, parliament, civil society, and the media to raise awareness regarding VAW-P and consider measures to curb this obstacle of public service. To that end, NDI will launch a media campaign to galvanize political and public opinion against hate speech and foster legislative advocacy to reduce VAW-P. Additionally, NDI will work with political parties participating in the local elections and media outlets to sign a Code of Conduct as a commitment to combat VAW-P.

For more information about WoMen Lead, please contact Genevieve Shea (gshea@ndi.org) in Washington, D.C. or Aleksandra Cvetkovska (acvetkovska@ndi.org) in North Macedonia.