

2019

# Taking the Wheel and Piloting Change

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By the National Democratic Institute



First Edition

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BY THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE



**FIRST EDITION**



The National Democratic Institute (NDI) is a nonprofit, non-partisan, nongovernmental organization that responds to the aspirations of people around the world to live in democratic societies that recognize and promote basic human rights.

Since its founding in 1983, NDI and its local partners have worked to support and strengthen democratic institutions and practices by strengthening political parties, civic organizations and parliaments, 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.

The Institute's work upholds the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

It also promotes the development of institutionalized channels of communications among citizens, political institutions and elected officials, and strengthens their ability to improve the quality of life for all citizens. For more information about NDI, please visit [www.ndi.org](http://www.ndi.org).

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The information and points of view from this publication originate in part from the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Parties conferences held in Brussels, Belgium in January 2017; Tirana, Albania in November 2017; and Mavrovo, Macedonia in June 2018. Additional contributions come from the Political Party Peer Conference in Helsinki, Finland, in June 2019 and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Parties Blog. Participants at the events mentioned above included: members of political parties from Western, Central and Eastern Europe; representatives from the Party Internationals; members of European Parliament and members of the political party assistance community.

Iain Gill, Political Party Specialist & Consultant with Gill Consulting International, and Francesca and Carlo Binda of Binda Consulting International drafted this document. Additional contributors are Margaret Curran, a former UK Labour MP; Khadija El Morabit, Deputy President of the International Network of Liberal Women; and Karolina Leakovic, Vice President of the Party of European Socialists Women. In addition, the blueprint utilized statements and articles by Pedro Sánchez, the Spanish Prime Minister and Secretary-General of the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party. Mohammad Khasawneh of Binda Consulting International designed the layout for this publication. This NDI publication was managed and written in part by Christian Brunner and Kellor Yde, with additional contributions by Ivan Doherty and Max Sycamore.



## THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY PARTIES INITIATIVE

In both new and established democracies, political parties consistently rank among the least trusted of democratic institutions. This distrust highlights a gap in priorities between parties and citizens that some say renders parties outdated. While political parties remain essential democratic institutions, they must evolve to meet the growing challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century that reflect the new ways citizens interact and organize. Renewed parties should not only adapt to societal and technological changes but also capitalize on these opportunities to build stronger relationships with citizens and more develop improved mechanisms for accountable governance.

NDI's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Political Parties Initiative was created to help parties evolve as organizations to more effectively connect with citizens, expand their internal democracy, become more inclusive, and better adapt to the digital era. This initiative began with a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Parties Blog, which features contributions from party practitioners, scholars, and members of the party assistance community. The blog generated discussions on how parties are or should be responding to challenges presented in new political and technological contexts.

Following the blog, NDI released [Reflect, Reform, Reengage: A Blueprint for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Parties](#), which provides a series of recommendations and best practices for parties seeking to undergo modernizing internal reforms. The blueprint offers recommendations, case studies, and practical tools to assist parties in approaching the reform and renewal process.

This guide is the culmination of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Parties Initiative and seeks to aid visionary, ambitious party members who may not have access to the power held by party leaderships. *Taking the Wheel* provides these party change agents with a roadmap for the implementation strategies and soft skills needed to navigate the arduous internal party reform process.

## **HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE**

This guide, with funding by the National Endowment for Democracy, is designed for political party activists, reform-minded party members, and National Democratic Institute (NDI) activities. The guide aims to provide party reformers with the tools and potential strategies needed to successfully implement an internal reform within a political party. The document includes the following sections:

- **The Journey to Reform**, this section contains a series of practical advice and how-tos about managing the varying skills and situations reformers will encounter during the reform effort.
- **Leadership and Transparency, Gender Equality, and Including Citizens in the Reform Journey** are each of the guide's thematic sections. They include case studies, recommendations, and a series of templates and assessment tools designed to offer building blocks of a roadmap for a party activist seeking to implement a reform in one of these areas. However, the overarching principles and suggestions apply to general best practices for achieving internal reform.
- **Recommendations** for reform activists, party leaders, and democracy assistance providers on how each can be more successful along the journey of reform and/or become an ardent ally to reform activists and efforts.

This guide is intended to be read from start to finish or in sections; both offer the user an opportunity to absorb the lessons learned from unique case studies and utilize the accompanying templates to apply them to their reform journey. Reformers and change agents will find practical advice and recommended strategies that are based on the best practices and shared experiences from other reformers.

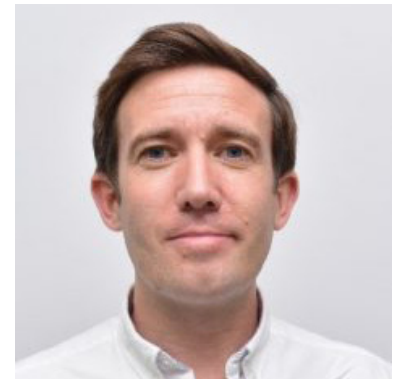


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## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

|   | <b>PAGE</b> |
|---|-------------|
| Acknowledgements  | 3           |
| The 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Parties Initiative         | 4           |
| How to use this guide                                   | 5           |
| Reform Scenario Biographies                             | 6           |
| <br>  |             |
| <b>The Journey to Reform</b>                            | <b>11</b>   |
| The Case for Internal Reform                            | 12          |
| Setting the Reform Context: Taking the Wheel            | 14          |
| Case Studies  | 20          |
| Finding and Building Alliances in a Political Party     | 20          |
| Using a Women’s Forum to Influence Reform               | 21          |
| Reform Scenarios: Democratizing the Policy Process      | 24          |
| Tips for Reform   | 26          |
| Template: Reform/Policy Framework                       | 28          |
| Template: Power Mapping                                 | 29          |
| <br>  |             |
| <b>Leadership and Transparency</b>                      | <b>33</b>   |
| Why Leadership and Transparency are Critical for Reform | 34          |
| Setting the Reform Context: Driving Transparency        | 35          |
| Case Studies  | 37          |
| Initiating Reform from the Top                          | 37          |
| Practicing What We Preach: Reforming PSOE               | 39          |
| Reform Scenarios: Cultivating New Leaders               | 41          |
| Tips for Reform   | 44          |
| Template: Leadership Self-Assessment Guide              | 45          |
| Template: Out-of-the-box brainstorming                  | 47          |



|   | <b>PAGE</b> |
|---|-------------|
| <b>Gender Equality</b>  | <b>49</b>   |
| Importance of Reform: goals and objectives of this section                  | 50          |
| Setting the Reform Context: Sharing the Road                                | 52          |
| Case Studies  | 56          |
| Getting to 45 percent: Changing Politics for Women in the U.K.              | 56          |
| Fitting in and fighting for gender equality in Morocco                      | 58          |
| Reformer Scenarios: Making Gender Equality a Reality                        | 61          |
| Tips for Reform   | 64          |
| Template  | 65          |
| <br>  |             |
| <b>Including Citizens in the Reform Journey</b>                             | <b>69</b>   |
| The Importance of Reform and the Role Citizens Can Play                     | 70          |
| Setting the Reform Context: Inclusion as the Engine of Reform               | 71          |
| Case Studies  | 76          |
| Elections within SDP Croatia: Installing Democracy in<br>a Democratic Party | 76          |
| Bringing Citizens On Board for Tough Decisions                              | 78          |
| Reformer Scenarios: Creating Meaningful Voter Engagement                    | 81          |
| Tips for Reform   | 84          |
| Template  | 88          |
| <br>  |             |
| <b>Recommendations</b>  | <b>90</b>   |
| <b>Conclusion</b>   | <b>92</b>   |



# The Journey to Reform

**«I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone  
across the water to create many ripples.»**

*Mother Teresa*





## THE CASE FOR INTERNAL REFORM

Reformers demonstrate leadership, but they are not necessarily leaders. Reformers, or change-agents, are powerful people but do not always need to challenge those with formal authority since leaders often resist change as an affront to their personal or professional accomplishments. A successful reformer is sometimes able to convince leadership figures that change is essential, or has the potential to strengthen the position or legacy of leaders. If that is not possible, a successful reformer can build alliances and coalitions and gain momentum to which others pay attention.



Sometimes efforts to reform resemble a relay race; a reformer starts conversations s/he will not personally finish and pushes boundaries s/he can not see moving. But these initial efforts and discussions greatly help others feel empowered to take up the baton for the next stage of change. Often, a reformer will not be involved in the final reform implementation, but s/he will have been instrumental in paving the road to reform.

The process and acts of reform are not hostile when they are genuinely intended to strengthen the party, gain support for a policy, or build coalitions. But change is often difficult for people to accept. “Better the devil you know than the one you do not” is an English idiom that has its equivalence in many other languages. Change also takes time to design and implement; busy people often abandon the prospect of change after understanding the efforts required.

This section is intended as a general guide for any reformer. It provides a description of the qualities, tools, and skills that successful change agents or reformers have and use. The case studies illustrate that, regardless of the focus of reform, cultivating alliances, realistic planning, thinking “outside the box” and including others in the reform journey are the building blocks to success. Ultimately, the most valuable quality of a reformer is determination and building a base of support.





This section will explore these themes with the following:

- **Setting the Reform Context: Taking the Wheel**
  - Why Individuals are Critical for Driving Change
  - What to Consider Ahead of the Reform Journey
  - Finding Reform Allies
  - Essential Leadership Skills for Reformers
- **Case Study:** Finding and Building Alliances in a Political Party
- **Case Study:** Using a Women's Forum to Influence Reform
- **Reform Scenarios:** Democratizing the Policy Process
- **Tips for Reform**



## SETTING THE REFORM CONTEXT: TAKING THE WHEEL

### Why Individuals Are Critical for Driving Change

Reforming a political party often begins with one individual's vision for change. This concept can be challenging to consider, especially if you are outside the "inner circle" of decision-making. Most individuals on the inside of large and established organizations build walls and barriers in an attempt to stymie change; they have a vested interest to maintain the status quo since it already serves them well.



Parties are often, by their nature, organizationally stagnant; party officials usually only mention reforms during elections cycles or in response to a scandal. However, intra-party change happens more often through the actions of individuals, also known as change-agents. In established democracies and more nascent democratic systems, individual reformers have successfully led institutional changes to the way their party develops policies, reports financial disclosures, and nominates candidates for elected positions. Quotas for women candidates are now an accepted part of the political culture in several countries, but they were not always. The actions of many internal change agents, over a long time, drove change right to the heart of political party decision-making. Status quos are made to be broken!



*«It's the action, not the fruit of the action, that's important. You have to do the right thing. It may not be in your power, may not be in your time, that there'll be any fruit. But that doesn't mean you stop doing the right thing. You may never know what results come from your action. But if you do nothing, there will be no result.»*

**Mahatma Gandhi**

Like any organization, fundamentally reforming a political party begins with small steps and private chats between peers, conversations that start informally after committee meetings, or during coffee breaks at party events. These conversations help to expand the circle of influence and create channels of communication with different stakeholders who can invest in creating internal change. These conversations inevitably lead to changes in behavior by party leaders, members, activists, and supporters. Igniting this behavioral change is one of the most vital steps for successful internal reforms, and individual party activists are best positioned to achieve this change. Individuals, not a committee of elected officials or party leaders, can lead internal reform efforts in large part because they are not forced to capitulate to the “political will” behind specific reforms. It can be challenging to incentivize party leadership figures and bodies to commit themselves to a reform process, requiring long-term implementation plans, when they have more urgent priorities such as winning elections. But individual party members *can* manage these reform implementation plans.

Implementing reform is not possible without individual agents of change. But individuals need a plan. Developing a strategic plan, forming internal alliances, soliciting external support, persuading leadership figures are all actions done by individual change agents. With dedicated preparation, unwavering commitment and strategic soft power skills, it is possible for individuals, seemingly on the peripheries of power, to lead reform efforts successfully. Party reformers may never rise to be the general secretary or on the executive committee of their party, but internal change happens beyond influential members and through various avenues led by inspired agents of change.

## **What to Consider Ahead of the Reform Journey**



**Vision:** Change is hard. Leading change can, at times, seem insurmountable. Having the courage of one’s convictions is critical to seeing reform through to its conclusion. Maintaining a vision – an insight into the inspirational, long-term change resulting from change – sustains reformers during their journey. Party reformers’ commitment to their vision is what enables them to endure scrutiny, institutional barriers, the competition for resources, and challenges to the reform’s merit.



**Planning:** Another crucial ingredient for successful reform is a plan. Overcoming the pitfalls that can lead to unnecessary obstacles is vital for a reformer's ability to stay positive, on message, and on schedule. It is important to appreciate that all plans change, and even the best ones are forced to adjust and compromise. Strategic planning is critical for a reform's implementation and never ends. Planning is a constant and evolving process, with the inherent components of a solid strategic plan being flexibility and structure. It must be able to adapt to internal and external changes while simultaneously providing a framework to keep objectives on track. Change to plans is inevitable, and consideration of alternative solutions and adaptable processes should form part of any plan for reform. Communication, preparation, and organization can make strategic planning advantageous for a reform's successful application.



There are many templates for strategic planning. Successful reformers use elements of available models while creating unique plans that utilize existing and future relationships, resources, and skills for maximum impact. A plan's success links to the information upon which it is based. Plans include only well-researched issues proven to be true, not assumptions or vagaries. Most importantly, fruitful planning is realistic, focusing only on what is achievable with the resources available to reformers. As important as

preparation is to any successful action, being consumed by the planning process itself can interfere with the actual effort to move forward. A favorite tactic of many who oppose real reform is to engage in endless planning that never results in an action. Change agents need to find a balance between planning and acting.

**Timing:** Another central element of successful reform is timing. Some moments are better than others to gain the attention of allies and decision-makers. For example, an election campaign is not the best time to propose major internal party reforms - unless they are directly related to the elections and are also likely to increase the party's vote. Understanding when party officials and activists are most open to considering change is vital to a reformer's strategy, so interventions have maximum impact.

Recognizing unexpected occasions for change can also influence the timing of reform action. Opportunities for reform can sometimes present themselves at unanticipated moments. Often a crisis in a party or the country provides a possibility for reform. If change agents are unprepared, it can be challenging to take advantage of an invaluable window for transformation.



## Finding Reform Allies

Even the best reforms have internal opposition. Inevitably, there will be colleagues, elected officials, and influential members who will work to stop the debate or implementation of your reform. Developing change that aims to improve the collective health of the party instead of one designed to advance personal interests is the best way to both circumvent this opposition and build a coalition of supporters and allies. Before beginning to build a support base for reform, it is important to answer two questions. Who is invested in maintaining the status quo, and who benefits from it? Identifying these groups and individuals who are resistant to reform, will save time, energy, and resources throughout the reform process. The end of this section contains a template for power mapping – a useful tool in identifying allies.

Once determining which individuals and groups are likely to oppose reform, identifying where the reform will find support is the logical next step. Depending on the change, identifying natural supporters within the party can be easy. These supporters will comprise the core of a support base and sometimes even be a joint partner during the reform process. Utilizing the strengths, resources, and influence of reform's natural supporters is vital for successful implementation. Determining external individuals and groups who can support change may take some out-of-the-box thinking. Civil society organizations (CSOs) can be natural allies, depending on the reform, by using social media and offline civic forums to spread awareness about reform efforts. They can help create unconventional and unique partnerships. As noted in the first case study, below, sometimes supporters may have nothing to do with the issue at hand but will support it in expectation of reciprocal support for another topic.

Often reformers have to compromise on some aspects of reform initiatives to win over certain supporters. Reformers need to define where, and on what, they are willing to compromise so they are ready to negotiate with potential allies. Some individuals seek to co-opt reforms or attempt to strip or amend crucial components. Identifying who is looking to compromise and who is interested in co-optation will be a persistent activity throughout the reform process. Building a coalition of internal and external supporters for change is not easy. The individual reformer needs to be authentic and capable of delivering results. The reform itself must be captivating and innovative while remaining practical. However, the combination of a savvy change agent and a compelling reform make building a coalition of dedicated supporters to help the reform come to fruition all the easier.



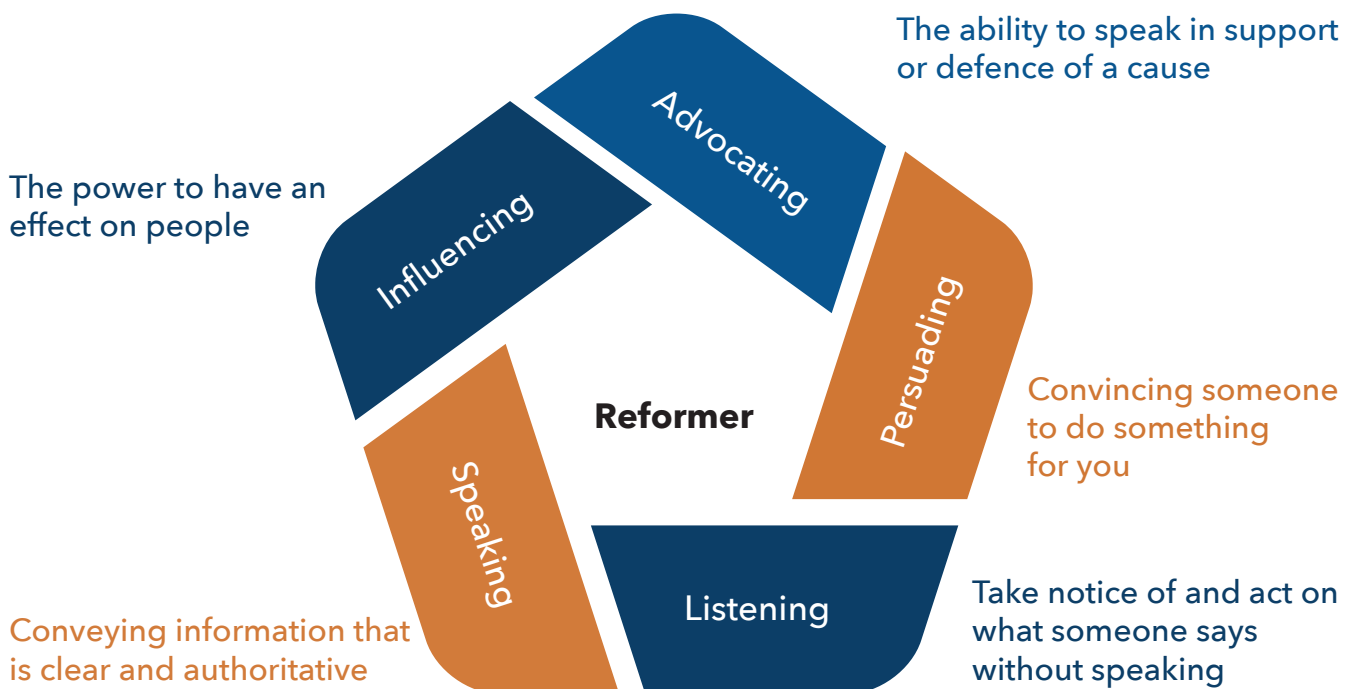


**Additional considerations and questions around building reform supporters are:**

- Who are the reforms’ natural allies and opponents? Examine the party’s organizational hierarchy and identify who would benefit from the change and who stands to lose influence, power, and resources.
- What role, if at all, can the media - especially social media - play in bringing awareness and support to the reform?
- Throughout the reform process, be aware that there will be some fluctuation in levels of support from allies. This is natural and not always a signal to re-strategize the plan or abandon efforts.

**Essential Leadership Skills for Reformers**

As noted at the beginning of this section, reformers demonstrate leadership in a variety of capacities and to varying degrees. The success of change-agents depends upon their ability to get things done, but also to bring people along the road to reform. There are five essential leadership skills that can help a reformer endure the journey and successfully change the party for the better. These skills can have a decisive impact on building meaningful relationships, which leads to greater effectiveness and less burden in reaching a goal.



**Influencing** is having a vision of the desired outcome, without using force or coercion and being able to motivate people to work together toward making the vision a reality. Influence is the capital and credit built before persuading someone at a later point.

**Persuading** is presenting a case in such a way as to sway the opinion of others, make people believe certain information, or motivate a decision. Persuasion is 'cashing in' on the capital built through influencing tactics. For most reformers, influence is the preferred means to a productive end, because influence is a foundation of trust and credibility solidified over time. Persuasion techniques applied in situations that are best suited for influence *can often appear as manipulative* and any compliance is temporary at best.



**Advocating** is to publicly champion and support a particular cause or policy. A successful reform effort depends on understanding what the advocacy issues are, why they are needed, and who should be receiving said advocacy.

**Effective Listening** is actively absorbing information, showing interest, and providing feedback to the speaker, so that s/he knows the message was received. Listening matters because it shows concern, builds trust, displays commitment, and highlights the reformer's values of empathy and respect as a leader.

**Public Speaking** is not exclusively about being the loudest or even the most provocative. It is about conveying messages clearly and authoritatively. Some of the best public speakers are shy and reserved, but when they know their issues and have the conviction of their arguments, they can confidently speak publicly.

One of the fundamental conditions for bringing people along the reform journey is developing trust-based relationships. Without trust and mutual respect, successfully persuading anyone to any cause is futile. To build the level of trust needed, reformers should demonstrate sustained subject-matter competency in the reform, as well as commitment and passion to the cause. Most importantly, they need to connect with their audience on multiple levels.



## CASE STUDIES

### Finding and Building Alliances in a Political Party

Carlo Binda

As an activist in the youth wing of the Saskatchewan New Democratic Party in the 1980's, I and my colleagues felt that the senior party leaders wanted the youth wing to be "seen, but not heard." That wasn't entirely true though; they certainly wanted – and expected – to hear from us to support their direction, policies, or decisions. However, if they expected us to be foot-soldiers during elections or to campaign for issues of significance for the party, then we wanted a seat at the table and the ability to influence decision-making. The same was true of our colleagues in the women's wing.

At the local constituency level, and during party meetings at all levels, the youth and women's wings agreed to support one another's reform initiatives. While the two wings' priorities did not always coincide, sometimes we would back an action that had little to do with us as a formal structure but was of paramount importance to the women's wing. We all understood that the women's wing would reciprocate on issues of importance to the youth wing, but not necessarily a priority for the women's wing.

In advance of any party meeting or decision-making process (votes at conventions or policy debates), the youth and women's wings would hold a joint meeting to strategize our advocacy efforts and actions. In doing this, we were able to share resources (financial and human) and we developed strategies and plans to influence other groups within the party (such as unions and the Aboriginal people's wing). The cooperation was not without conflict, which was usually solved by communicating, and each side effectively articulating the importance of an issue that required support. Most importantly, both wings kept an eye on the bigger, long-term goal. Creating an alliance gave the two groups increased influence and powers of persuasion together, than alone. Our mutual support allowed us to push for greater inclusion at every layer of the party, including representation at the highest levels of the party.



*Our mutual support allowed us to push for greater inclusion at every layer of the party, including representation at the highest levels of the party.*

The alliance between the youth and women’s wings also meant that, regardless of senior party officials’ point of view, they had no choice but to hear from us; to really listen to what we had to say because we had the power of numbers and moral suasion. Even then, it would have been difficult – and unacceptable – for the leadership to ignore both the youth and women in the party. As a consequence of this powerful collaboration, youth and women (as well as other segments of the party) participate in the permanent leadership structures today. It would be unthinkable, not to mention a violation of the by-laws and constitution we helped shape, to exclude women or youth from the executive level.

## **Lessons Learned and Advice for Reformers**

- This collaboration was not always easy, and it required a great deal of negotiation and compromise.
- Sometimes you have to expend political capital on something that is not in your direct interest but with the understanding that your partners will expend their capital in your favor when needed.
- Broad-based coalitions or collaboration are more effective in bringing various skill sets, resources, and networks together than going it alone.
- Reaching your objectives may take a little longer if you are also supporting the objectives and priorities of others, but when you do reach your goals, the results are more durable.

## **Using a Women’s Forum to Influence Reform**

**Karolina Leakovic**

For more than 20 years, I have participated in Croatia’s Social Democratic Party (SDP) Women’s Forum (the Forum), primarily focusing on building coalitions with external activists to advance women’s interests inside the party. In many democracies, women’s wings or forums are generally considered to be a non-influential contributor in the party’s policy development, and an insignificant path for one’s career advancement within the party. However, my experience is, thankfully, quite different. An overlooked advantage of structures like my Forum is the opportunity to introduce innovations in over-administered and bureaucratic components of a party’s core functions, such as outreach activities or policy development.



While the Women’s Forum has never been a part of the core party structure (its leader has never participated in Presidency meetings and not considered as part of the formal leadership team), it is influential because of the credibility we built and the authority we developed over time as a serious policy contributor. Our group’s unorthodox, non-hierarchical, and consensus-building methods to deliver policy solutions internally –and to voters – gained the respect of our colleagues and the public. As a result, our ability and opportunities to contribute to the democratic evolution of the organization increased.

Since its founding, SDP leaders regarded the Forum’s organizational and financial autonomy, separate election procedures, and independence as an opportunity for the party to establish and maintain a two-way policy dialogue with CSOs. Because of the relationships we built through continuous exchanges, party leaders encouraged the Forum to nurture its independent voice, define its policy priorities and maintain an organizational structure and mandate, as long as those – in broad terms – did not collide with the larger party program.

CSOs valued the opportunity to influence SDP’s policy agenda by cooperating and communicating with the Forum. Some of the most successful outcomes of this cooperation included legislation on gender-based violence and, most recently, introducing a reform to enforce gender quotas in elections. In both those cases, the Forum was the “behind the scenes” ally, whose influence and lobbying were monumental in moving these reforms from a policy idea, to a legislative reality.



*The Forum was the “behind the scenes” ally, whose influence and lobbying were monumental in moving these reforms from a policy idea, to a legislative reality.*

The role of the Forum within the party has also resulted in ground-breaking internal organizational reforms. Although political parties in Croatia are supposed to establish transparent budget lines for policy activities, many do not. Recognizing an opportunity to demonstrate our party’s commitment to transparency, SDP opted to create annual budget lines for all three of its semi-independent organizations (Youth, Women, and Senior Forums). SDP’s Board of Directors, in coordination with the Forum, plans and approves our annual budget, allowing both to prioritize resources and prepare a short and mid-term agenda. For example, the

Forum invests one-quarter of its yearly budget in joint projects with CSOs and trade unions, something to which the Party itself is unable to commit. The Forum's financial independence allows us to prioritize alliances to continue to promote reform within the party.

Another reform effort initiated by the Forum involved using extra party funds to support gender mainstreaming and inclusion in party activities. In Croatia, political parties receive incentives to increase women's participation in parliament. In addition to the public funding for each member of parliament elected, parties receive ten percent more for each female MP elected. We, therefore, promoted a new party statute to commit the SDP to invest the funds received for each female MP towards party activities focused on gender equality, diversity, and promotion of underrepresented groups. Although the SDP has not fully implemented this reform yet, the party leadership only considered this investment on the strength of the Forum's credibility and trust to deliver positive results through these resources and activities.

## **Lessons Learned and Advice for Reformers**

- The Forum's relationships with civil society, cultivated through years of good-faith dialogue and partnerships, resulted in significant influence to push reforms through the party.
- Be prepared to take advantage of an unexpected opening to build the political will for an inventive reform.
- Do not make plans that cannot change.
- Be open-minded about who is a potential ally or supporter. You never know who might have leverage with a senior member of your party or have a passionate interest in your cause - get out there and spread the word!





## REFORM SCENARIOS: DEMOCRATIZING THE POLICY PROCESS

**Reform Goal:** To democratize the policy development process at every level of the party.

**Hopes:** Including diverse and wider opinions in our policy development process

**Concerns:** Our party's policy-making process is very centralised and conducted behind closed doors. It prevents us from producing expert-oriented and evidence-based policy papers.



**Party Issue:** Policy-making political parties should be member and supporter. Political parties should act as platforms of democratization and inclusion for as many interested people as possible. The more people involved in the process, the more exposed, tested and empowering the policy can be.

### Reformer: Head of Policy Conference Team

**Reform Challenge:** *"There is a general unwillingness of central leadership to relinquish any meaningful elements of power or decision-making."*

**Perspective from Margaret Curran, Former UK Labour MP:** This is a feature of power structures universally! Leaders fail to share decision-making for a variety of reasons. At best, they



may not feel they have time to make an effort to consult, especially if urgent decisions are required. At worst, leaders have no incentives to consult; party members are failing to hold them accountable, so why should they include others in making decisions? Reformers need to construct convincing arguments to demonstrate that allowing party activists to participate in decision-making actually increases leaders' authority and legitimacy. Party leaders should see that, instead of "relinquishing" power, they are gaining support and solidifying their position when they consult others before making decisions. It isn't necessarily giving up the power of decision-making but rather making sure decisions are widely supported because stakeholders have been asked and allowed to provide opinions.

It starts by having conversations within and outside the organization. This is especially the case in policy-making. Parties have to connect and respond to the party membership, making it a vital resource in this process. Members can contribute experiences, ideas, and networks that assist the party in developing policy and demonstrate the benefits of sharing or opening some of the party's decision making.

Consultation and inclusion in decision-making take time and effort. Many leaders do not want to take the time, or they fear confrontation and anyone questioning their authority. Start with taking the lead to organize small consultation events (a panel at a party conference, for example) that do not challenge the authority of the leadership and might even support current actions or recent decisions. Find a "friendly" group and ask the party leadership to explain a recent decision to show leaders that consultation need not be confrontational, but can be affirming.

**Reform Challenge:** *"There is insufficient ideological training and preparation at the grassroots level, particularly in rural branches, and it is impacting our ability to have a clear policy platform that reflects our values."*

**Perspective from Karolina Leakovic, Vice President of PES Women:** Creating interventions that democratize the policy-making process helps build greater expertise in various areas and offers opportunities to promote the party's policy interests and priorities.

Explore establishing a regular "members orientation day," where new and existing members can connect, exchange new developments, and participate in workshops or question and answer sessions on specific issues or initiatives. Rather than insisting on formal political education programs, parties should offer a range of activities aimed at informing members on policy positions and providing arguments for preferred policy choices. It could be in the



form of a debate, with senior members or party officials contributing input and advice in closed-group preparations. Learning-by-doing and allowing members to share their views (instead of being lectured!) boosts their self-confidence and equips them with information on a specific ideological position.

Book clubs, reading groups, and film screenings can also spark lively debates and reinvigorate interest in the party. Local communities are often proud of their heritage and recognizing important local historical events proved, for us, to be a great way of connecting with citizens. Good policy-making is about making practical choices in the here and now. For that process to be successful, members should be well informed and interested.

## Lessons Learned and Advice for Reformers

- Start by organizing positive consultations that demonstrate the benefits of sharing decision-making.
- Offer a range of creative activities to inform and engage members of the party.

## TIPS FOR REFORM

Persuading political parties to reform requires harmony between a unique political climate, a strategic change agent and, an innovative solution for improving a component of the organization. A change agent seeking to execute an internal political party reform will have to consistently persuade key stakeholders and coalesce a base of support around the reform to carry it through each stage of the reform process.

## Quick tips to help prepare ahead of your reform journey

- Develop a clear vision and outline of the scope of the reform. What will it do? Whom will it impact? How will this reform benefit the party?
- Create a comprehensive list of the necessary tasks to complete the reform journey. Be specific! Each task should have an objective with a timeline to complete it. Assign tasks to specific individuals. Be realistic about how much one person can do. Multiple individuals can contribute to a job, but there should be one person responsible for tracking progress and ensuring its completion.
- Identify which actions require money. Identify sources of income for tasks that require money and make contingency plans.

- Always be prepared, take time to do the necessary research.
- Study and know the rules inside out, this means party rules of procedures, by-laws, or the constitution. Sometimes your advantage comes with knowing the rules better than anyone else.
- Learn from mistakes, identify why they happened, and move on. Try alternative methods and appreciate opportunities to grow.
- Surround yourself with a good team based on their skills and competencies. Identify where your weaknesses are and see if you can delegate tasks that are not your strengths.
- Ask for help when you need it.
- Don't get stuck in the comparison trap. Your experiences and skills set are unique; discover ways to use them to your advantage.
- Determine and plan for what you can and cannot control.
- Identify possible "red lines" and how to manage your approach to, or overstep, what is considered a red line.
- Make yourself indispensable by taking on tasks and responsibilities no one else wants.

**Keep these suggestions in mind as you begin to plan each stage of your reform journey.**

## **Tips to inspire**

- Develop a personal story about your decision to embark on this reform effort and how you came to choose it.
- Make your journey of reform a collective effort and give agency to the allies and colleagues that form your coalition.
- Demonstrate a commitment and passion for your reform to potential allies and effectively communicate how this reform will improve the party.

## **How to influence**

- Research the formal and informal processes your political party uses to adopt and amend statutes and bylaws. Map out where the opportunities are to influence the decision-making process(es) and key stakeholders.
- Identify the incentives that motivate the party leadership and the necessary committees to change. Assess your ability to leverage these incentives.
- Develop talking points about what issue your reform will solve, why your solution will be effective, and how you can successfully implement it.



## Keys for persuasion

- Identify the areas of your reform on which you are willing to compromise and be ready to negotiate.
- Speak to how your reform will positively impact key stakeholders and prepare examples of how similar initiatives have made sustainable gains for the party.
- Discover how decision-makers get their information internally and externally and find opportunities to incorporate your reform talking points or ideas into these information flows.

## TEMPLATE: REFORM/POLICY FRAMEWORK

This template helps frame policy issues or internal reform initiatives.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>Problem</b><br/><i>One or two sentences defining the problem.</i></p>   |  |
| <p><b>Reason for raising the problem</b><br/><i>Explain why the problem is being brought forward.</i></p>   |  |
| <p><b>Symptoms</b><br/><i>List how the problem manifests itself.</i></p>  |  |
| <p><b>Elaborate on the Symptoms</b><br/><i>For each symptom listed, explain what is happening and the impact of the symptom (why it matters).</i></p>   |  |
| <p><b>Context</b><br/><i>Explain the history of the problem:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What are the trends that contribute to the problem?</i></li> <li>• <i>Are others facing the same problem?</i></li> </ul> |  |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>Desired Change (Outcome)</b><br/><i>What is the change that the reform/policy response is expected to achieve?</i></p>          |  |
| <p><b>Recommendation for Reform</b><br/><i>What is the recommended course of action, including chosen instruments for change?</i></p> |  |

**TEMPLATE: POWER MAPPING**

When the right opportunity presents itself, reformers must be prepared to act. Whether you do it in advance or as part of your reform initiative planning, understanding power relations is essential. Some people will support your reform, and others will oppose your change. Some people, or groups of people, will be directly affected, others will not. Some individuals are influential, and others are not. Take the time to specifically identify stakeholders, supporters, and opponents to understand how they relate to your reform and each other.



The first template below can help you answer questions about the most important people related to your reform. Once you have identified these people, plot them on the second template, which enables you to know where everyone stands and provides suggestions on how to approach them as you embark on your reform journey.

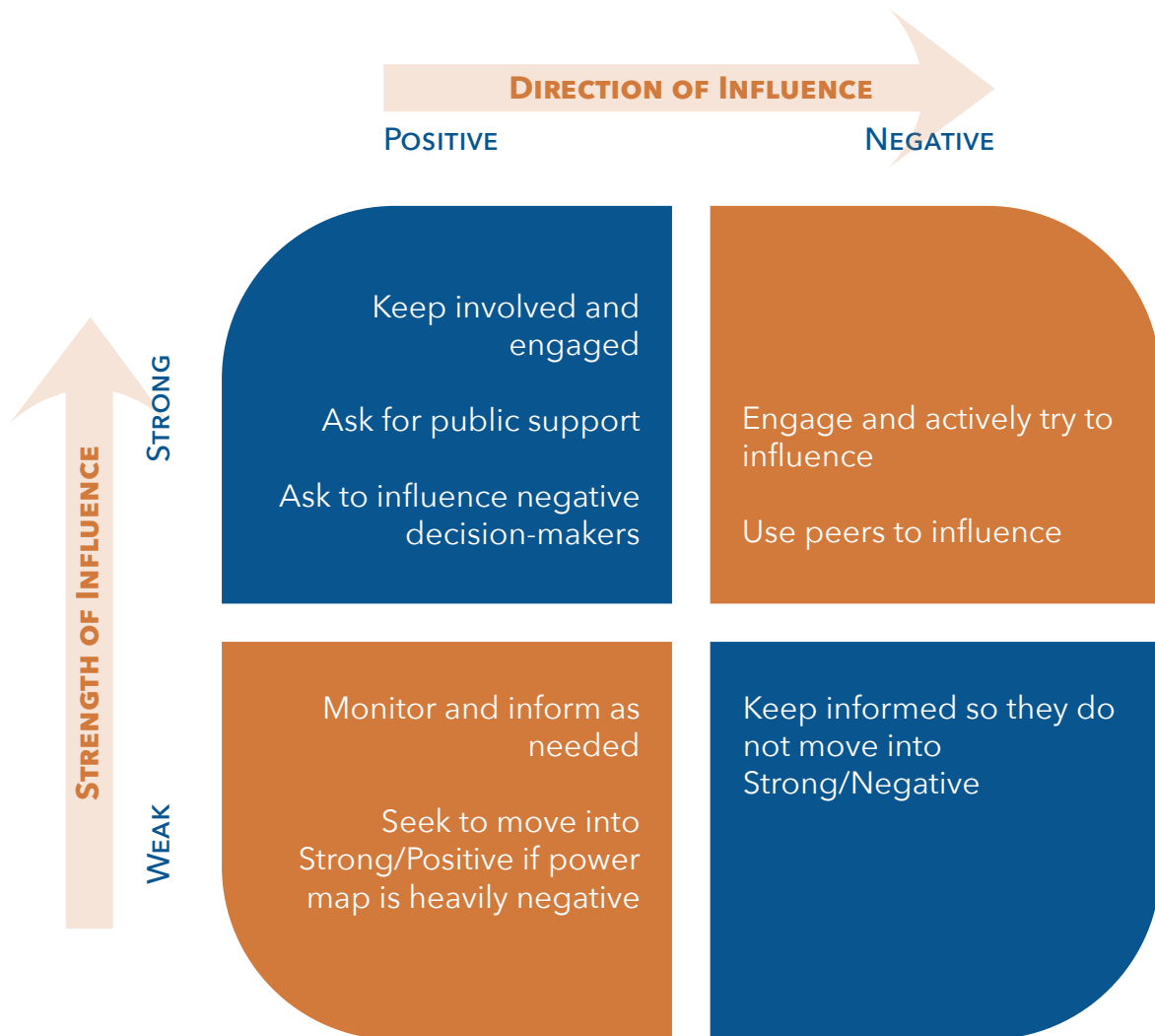


My/Our Objective is:

Consider and answer the following questions

**WHO DO YOU NEED TO INFLUENCE?**

| <b>Stakeholders</b> | <i>How much will they be affected by this action?</i> | <i>What change will they have to adjust to?</i> | <i>How will they react initially?</i>                         | <i>What do they need to support the policy?</i>               |
|---------------------|---|---|---|---|
|                     |   |   |   |   |
| <b>Supporters</b>   | <i>Is their support strong or weak?</i>               | <i>How can I maximize their support?</i>        | <i>Who influences them, and can they be enlisted to help?</i> | <i>Why do they support my issue or reform?</i>                |
|                     |   |   |   |   |
| <b>Opponents</b>    | <i>Will their opposition be strong or weak?</i>       | <i>What will their opposition look like?</i>    | <i>How can I neutralize or minimize their opposition?</i>     | <i>Who influences them, and can they be enlisted to help?</i> |
|                     |   |   |   |   |





# Leadership and Transparency

**What counts in life is not the mere fact that we have lived it. It is what difference we have made to the lives of others that will determine the significance of the life we lead."**

*Nelson Mandela*







## WHY LEADERSHIP AND TRANSPARENCY ARE CRITICAL FOR REFORM

There is a difference between leaders and leadership. Leadership is a quality, and not all leaders have complete leadership qualities. All too often, leaders act as though sharing information or empowering those around them will diminish their ability to control or direct the policy and politics of the party or government. Failing to cede complete control is, unfortunately, a common trait, particularly in countries emerging from authoritarian systems, though not exclusively. It is often difficult to convince leaders that they actually strengthen their position, legitimacy, and ability to affect direction when they are open, inclusive, and empower those around them. And sometimes, those in leadership positions also struggle with driving reform.

Any reform, but particularly managed reform, requires people with leadership qualities whether they are formal leaders or rank and file members with the strong character to do what is necessary. Central to successfully leading credible reform is the ability to objectively challenge the status quo, to be self-critical, and to prioritize issues over personalities.

This section explores the leadership qualities more than personalities. The case studies demonstrate that change agents lead reform by seizing opportunities and leveraging relationships and circumstances. Often crises or challenges to the status quo provide opportunities to wield leadership to promote better policies or reform institutions. Regardless of what starts the reform journey, transparent leaders are usually in the driver's seat.



This section will explore these themes with the following:

- **Setting the Reform Context:** Driving Transparency
  - Using Transparency as a Tools for Leaders
  - How Leaders Embed Transparency
  - Transparency's Short and Long Term Benefits
  - Why Transparent Leadership is Good Politics
- **Case Study:** Initiating Reform from the Top
- **Case Study:** Practicing What We Preach: Reforming PSOE
- **Reform Scenarios:** Leadership
- **Tips for Reform**

## **SETTING THE REFORM CONTEXT: DRIVING TRANSPARENCY**

### **Transparency as Tools for Leaders**

Transparency is central to the effectiveness of political parties operating in mature political systems. In modern politics, public trust in political leadership depends on embedding transparent practices within every structure and process of a political party. Installing these practices allows parties to present themselves as a mature, competent, and credible alternative to populist approaches and authoritarian appeals.

Globally, establishment or traditional, non-populist political parties face unprecedented challenges. Parties across the ideological spectrum, in new and old democracies, are encountering diminishing voter (and membership) bases, plummeting public trust in their capacity to deliver meaningful policies and, a rapidly evolving information, communication, and technology landscape. Transparency must be central to every response and solution to these challenges. Implementing transparent procedures and operating in good faith have proven to be vital components in the effort towards rebuilding public trust and re-engaging disaffected voters in democratic processes. Restoring public confidence in democratic parties is an undervalued channel to push back against the proliferation of populist and anti-democratic parties. Parties that demonstrate their transparent principles and practices reassure the electorate that they put citizens' interests first, and that these parties offer real and credible solutions to voters' problems today and for their future.

### **How Leaders Embed Transparency**

Leadership is critical to embedding transparent processes in contemporary political parties. The rise of populist parties into parliaments and government coalitions – which, in large part, is because they offer simplistic and shortsighted answers to systemic, complex problems – can overshadow the push for transparency in political processes. Many non-populist political leaders lose sight of the importance and value of openness. Why should we release our tax returns, our donor lists, our internal election results, if populist parties are not punished for failing to do so?



The answer partly lies in the fact that non-populist leaders are offering complex answers, not simple, quick fixes. For complicated solutions to gain a hearing, a base of credibility is required. For a party's leadership to be credible, with long-term prospects of success, it must ensure the party is accountable, consistent in its values, policies, and practices. The electorate must view a party as honest and genuinely motivated by the desire to change citizens' lives for the better.

## Transparency's Short and Long Term Benefits

Transparent politics, led by credible leaders, help create a climate of reasoned discussion of citizen's priorities and the options available to solve them. To have space where the electorate will engage in a reasoned discussion based on informed debate (and not sloganeering during campaign season), political actors need to be seen as trustworthy and honestly motivated towards improving their community's well-being. Embedding transparency fosters this trustworthiness. If the electorate sees a political actor as trustworthy, they are more likely to engage with their argument – *even if they disagree*. In the long term, this builds a more mature political culture, with long-term benefits and solutions to non-populist parties.

It is not enough, however, to rely on the good intentions of well-meaning individuals. Good leaders must surround themselves with processes, rules, and regulations to ensure the delivery of outcomes. Leaders must share the decision-making space within the party to allow for a variety of opinions that enrich the party internally and attract supporters from outside. There are various mechanisms that political parties can use to achieve this – formal and informal – conforming to the characteristics of an outward-facing political party, grounded in real-life experience.

## Why Transparent Leadership is Good Politics

In most democratic systems, the role of the individual leader of a political party takes on a particular significance. Most voters judge political parties by the effectiveness of their leaders, placing great responsibility on the party's members, staff and activists to hold their leaders accountable. Embedding transparency and accountability throughout the culture of the party is one of the best ways to achieve accountability while building credibility with voters and the general public.

Essentially, parties need to establish deep and compelling connections between their lead-

ers and their audiences. The task of the leader lies in understanding how voters see the party and knowing how to take decisive action to address problems and maximize opportunities for solutions. Voters need confidence that leaders have an ethical and moral compass, that they understand voters' day-to-day lives, and they can get things done that will have a positive impact on them and their community. Voters want someone authentic – not manufactured.

Party reformers who want to inject transparent processes and practices within their party need a variety of interpersonal and soft skills. While some reformers may be on the peripheries of power, others are the heart of it. Leadership is about making change happen and, often, taking bold decisions that may not always be in the immediate interest of the party. However, they have far-reaching political benefits, mainly trust. Trust that the systems work and are accountable to the public.

Poor leadership means change is left to chance, and the party cannot guarantee its effectiveness and value to the public. Poor leadership makes it easy for a party to be thrown off course by events and individuals that can damage the party's credibility, thereby limiting the public's willingness to listen to messages and policies. Leaving the public in the dark creates a vacuum of representation and good governance. Agents of change, throughout the party, can lead critical reform efforts that embed a transparent culture and accountable leadership.

## **CASE STUDIES**

### **Initiating Reform from the Top**

**Margaret Curran**

When the Labour Party was elected in 2003 as the largest party in the Scottish Parliament, it had a clear mandate to improve criminal justice issues and develop a women's rights agenda. In Scotland at the time, policy issues that received political and media attention were debated, decided, and funded through the national-level Scottish Parliament. That was the political center of attention and action.

As Minister for Equalities, I was the Cabinet Minister responsible for driving forward progressive change in women's rights in Scotland, with a particular priority towards women's social, economic, and political empowerment. When I came to office, Scotland had dismally low levels of rape prosecutions and limited access to support services for rape victims who also reported hostile treatment from police services.



I quickly identified that a part of the problem was a consistent lack of political attention to rape crisis funding. At the time, Scotland's 32 local councils managed funding for rape crisis. Budgets were, therefore, disaggregated into the 32 jurisdictions, and, at such a local level, there was insufficient public and political scrutiny to drive change. Local authorities easily could – and did – cut funding for rape crisis, with few people noticing, leaving systematic issues that have real political solutions, to fester. As a minister, I decided to centralize the budget for rape crisis, taking it from the control of local authorities.

Shifting the funding to the national level brought new transparency to the policy component of the issue, ensuring debate in the Scottish Parliament chamber, with full media coverage. The attention and debates led to meaningful votes on the policy and its funding. Finally, centralizing the budget made funding for rape crisis more accountable to stakeholders and interest groups. As a national budget, any future cuts to the program would be noticeable and controversial, allowing for more effective mobilization of citizens opposed to cuts.

### Lessons Learned and Advice for Reformers

Restructuring the rape crisis budget in this way made the policy salient and its funding transparent. The reform was critical for the Labour government in Scotland to drive forward its feminist and criminal justice agenda and to demonstrate its values and priorities. To this day, rape crisis funding in Scotland is still centralized and protected. My advice to colleagues facing similar challenges is to stand your ground, surround yourself with competent and thoughtful advisors, and believe in the courage of your convictions despite the opposition and heated debate. While you may not possess the authority of a cabinet minister, achieving this kind of reform is possible by a change agent with a coalition of supporters. You have to be proactive, recognize what obstacles are ahead, and plan accordingly. It is also important to identify what is attainable and build a realistic timeline for achieving your reform. Use the advantages your party provides you – in my case, a feminist, criminal justice agenda – to develop your reform's message and implementation plan. I used the timing of a post-election campaign momentum to introduce, lobby, and adopt my reform that was the embodiment of my party's campaign. Make sure to take advantage of opportunities and stick to your vision!



*Use the advantages your party provides you – in my case, a feminist, criminal justice agenda – to develop your reform's message and implementation plan.*

## **Practicing What We Preach: Reforming PSOE**

**Excerpts of a presentation from the 2017 Conference on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Parties by Dr. Pedro Sánchez, leader of the Partido Socialista Obrero Español**

How can we face the politics of distrust which we see today? Especially for established parties, the answer is simple yet complex. Lead by example and transform parties to invigorate democracy. Work within the system.



*Lead by example and transform parties to invigorate democracy.*

The reason for the European Union's (EU) decline is that institutions are failing to respond adequately to crises of employment, refugees, etc. In addition, the democracies in the EU member states are imperfect. What we should do in Europe then is to strengthen representative democracy in the member states. To achieve this, parties must lead by example. A majority of citizens do not feel represented by parties or parliaments. People feel that political parties and politicians only work for themselves. Most people see impunity as the biggest issue. This has led to an increase in populist, far-right and far-left representatives in the EU after the 2014 elections.

In Spain, on May 14, 2011, the Indignados movement held a public gathering in the center of Madrid, asking for "a real democracy." Protesters were saying that there is no change and no real democracy, and that "socialist parties" don't act socialist while in government. In a way, the Indignados movement was a constructive means of expressing dissatisfaction. A huge failure of the PSOE was that we didn't see the impact of these protests. The May 15 movement resulted in the creation of two new parties – Podemos and Ciudadanos. In just two years, the political system was changed from a bi-party system to one with four parties. In the end, the political debate was also transformed from speaking just about left/right issues to a new framework, which is new politics versus old politics.



What about PSOE? If democracy is about deliberation and decision-making, then the key issue is to engage more with participatory democracy and increase representativeness within the PSOE. To prevent the personalization of politics and to prevent dynasties, we limited the terms of partisan officials (not only for Prime Minister candidates or big-city mayors. There is a party-wide limit of three terms), and we run online primaries at each level – even for partisan officials. My party has a 140-year history, and I was the first secretary-general elected by the primary system in my party. While flawed, the primary system is one of the best ways to prevent the professionalization of politics.

To “practice what we preach,” the PSOE became the first political party in the country to establish a relationship with Transparency International (TI), Spain. By forming this relationship, the party agreed to release financial and other internal documents – through TI – to the public. In one year, the party went from a three on TI’s transparency scale to a ten. Soon, other Spanish parties signed their own memorandums of understanding with the organization.

We also tried to guarantee gender equality. We established zipper lists of male and female candidates. But this tactic was not as successful as it could have been. To counteract the crisis of representation, we tried to have both male and female leaders represented both for fresh blood and to counteract the patriarchy.

To be more accountable at the partisan level, I made a personal commitment as a leader that led to my resignation in 2016, as I said I would step down if I didn’t succeed. Throughout the years, I also aimed to create open debates with party members and take questions from members at monthly “open assemblies,” during which I could speak about what members wanted.

We need to change the way of speaking about ideology. We need to “find causes that fight.” For instance, Podemos’ strength was identifying with an anti-addiction platform. We should speak more about goals and less about means.

Populists attract many voters. We must engage with the voters and show that we understand their concerns and will take up their causes. We should stop focusing on populism itself and focus on solutions for people that vote for populists. Instead of criticizing populists, we should criticize ourselves and win back many of these voters who are former progressives.

## REFORM SCENARIOS: CULTIVATING NEW LEADERS

**Reform Goal:** To identify, retain and grow a cadre of emotionally mature and passionately committed future leaders.

**Hopes:** To assist with the development of a grassroots youth group that can cultivate a future prime minister.

**Concerns:** Unless drastic steps are taken soon, young people will completely disregard political parties as an appealing avenue to affecting meaningful change.



**Party Issue:** Externally, it is increasingly difficult to attract talented people into traditional parties due to competition from populist/radical fringes, civil society and tech start-ups. Internally, more established members, particularly the old guard, are resistant to freeing space for younger leaders.

### Reformer: Head of Youth Development

**Reform Challenge (1 of 3):** *“Internally, our youth and women’s group do not seem to be as successful as we would like, or imagined, in cultivating leaders for the future. What are we doing wrong? How can we find new groups to tap into?”*

**Perspective from Iain Gill, International Party Expert:** This is a global problem. In 2018, only 1.65 percent of parliamentarians around the world were in their 20s, and 11.87 percent are





in their 30s<sup>1</sup>. The vast majority of political parties have segregated ‘youth’ and ‘women’s’ groups – characterized by their relative autonomy, poor funding, and limited access to power. I would differentiate between where you are going wrong and where the inclusive processes you are using are going wrong.

Political party leaders complain that young people are disinterested in politics, but we know most of the spaces created for young people are various and tokenistic at best. Parties need clear processes to ensure that talented young people in politics have an open, transparent route to power. Party statutes should guarantee permanent seats on the national executive, the policy committee, the campaign committee. Sometimes it may take starting at the beginning. Research your internal processes for amending your party’s statutes and constitution. If you don’t change the system, you won’t change the outcome.

One idea used successfully in the Netherlands is a ‘talent spotter.’ This person is responsible for identifying and targeting potential quality leaders within memberships and the subcommittees and helps them navigate through the ranks of the party. The Democratic Alliance in South Africa has opted for a ‘[Young Leaders Programme](#),’ which nurtures and trains the most gifted young people in the party and gets them ready for senior political roles. This is an open, transparent, systematic process that has proven successful in nurturing future leaders.

**Reform Challenge (2 of 3):** *“Our current leadership is resistant to sharing power with younger members. They talk the good talk when it comes to ‘empowerment’ and ‘representation’ with international donors in the room, but they do not understand the need to invest resources to grow the individuals that would inevitably replace them.”*

**Perspective from Margaret Curran, Former UK Labour MP:** In my experience, established leaders are not very good at sharing power and do not always see the need to create change. However, if a party is to be vibrant and connected, it must have the capacity to reach out to young people, both men and women. The most effective and meaningful way to ensure a party achieves this is to involve young people at all levels in the party organization – from leadership through to policymaking. Parties who guarantee spaces for young people in their decision-making structures benefit considerably. This space can take different forms, but will usually involve cementing youth seats on the governing structures of the party, along with a

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1 <https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/political-participation/>

budget that supports the youth wing to organize and undertake a range of activities that then feeds back into the mainstream structures.

It is also vital that when parties reserve places for young people in the organization, they are not just 'token' positions but come with influence and power. To reflect the priorities of modern political organizations and create a pipeline of future leaders and candidates, youth representation should be gender-balanced at all levels. It can be a daunting experience for young people to sit alongside the established leadership of the party, so it is important to implement support strategies, like leadership development and mentoring programs.

Collective, as opposed to individual, leadership is of enormous importance to political parties and is often disregarded by those at the top. To attract and retain talented people, a party must ensure there is a positive culture where members and activists can enjoy and learn through their participation.

**Reform Challenge (3 of 3):** *"We are not getting a positive response from members of civil society and NGO groups to join the party, but we need fresh ideas. How can we be more appealing, externally?"*

**Perspective from Karolina Leakovic, Vice President of PES Women:** The digital and technological revolution is displacing and disrupting political parties' primacy as the locus of political involvement. Social movements, ad-hoc platforms, issue-based campaigns and civic initiatives compete with political parties to campaign in elections, develop policy and attract activists and experts to join their cause. Many civil society activists and experts are not interested in joining a party as regular members in the first place, but that does not mean you cannot try to use their political engagement to bring them in as affiliated members.

Several parties have developed various strategies to reach out to expert communities and social activists that improve the quality of their organizations. Parties have established expert forums, ad-hoc consultancy groups, and pursued policy dialogue with external actors via affiliated organizations. These efforts serve as a "soft introduction" for activists and experts to the political party. Others have introduced "temporary membership scheme" and a variety of membership statuses for individuals who do not wish to join immediately, or in full, early on. Youth and women's organizations can sometimes serve as recruitment pools and offer membership opportunities in those organizations, without committing to the full party. Membership can be encouraged by offering discount fees and providing full member's rights without a grace period.



## Lessons Learned and Advice for Reformers

- Be deliberate and systematic in identifying and nurturing young activists.
- Reserve places for youth activists and provide support and mentoring.
- Be creative about including external actors and provide a “soft introduction” to the party.

## TIPS FOR REFORM

When there is an opportunity for reform, what are the mechanisms and issues to consider in adopting more transparent approaches? Broadly speaking, the mechanisms can be considered under the following framework. These are not exhaustive, and the individual reformer should adapt them according to their party’s capacity, resources, and local political context. These tips have worked for other political parties around the world and serve as a great starting point to transform the party into a transparent organization.

|                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| <b>Message and policy</b>      | Publication of a manifesto and regular policy publications.  |
|                                | Direct engagement with civil society organizations (CSOs) and key stakeholders to consult, develop policy, gauge reaction, and search for ideas. |
|                                | Effective mechanisms of consultation, that are gender equal and inclusive of all members of the community.                                       |
|                                | Transparent methods of policy development (such as policy forums, workshops, and manifesto writing process).                                     |
|                                | Regular public engagement (such as public meetings, walkabouts, and community engagement activities).  |
| <b>Elected Representatives</b> | Selection of candidate procedures is open, publicized and regulated.   |
|                                | External oversight of rules on corruption and lobbying.  |
|                                | Mechanisms to justify votes, decisions, and financial support (for example contracts, publications, minutes from committee meetings).            |
|                                | Fair and robust complaints procedures.   |
|                                | Routine publication of expenses and staffing as well as sources of income and tax returns.   |



|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| <b>Funding</b>    | Publication of the party's annual accounts and expenses.   |
|                   | Clear rules and regulations governing party donations, including regulations on the size of donation, the nationality of donors etc. |
|                   | Party officials responsible for finances are personally liable.  |
|                   | Clear and legal compliance and documentation.  |
|                   | Independent auditors to oversee campaign financing.  |
| <b>Leadership</b> | Transparent processes to elect leaders (e.g. electoral college).   |
|                   | Clear, consistent and direct communication with the electorate.  |
|                   | Behavior consistent with values and party code of conduct.   |
|                   | Routine appearances with media.  |
|                   | Publication of daily schedule of meetings.   |

Such mechanisms create a well-organized party so that members and the general public have a clear understanding of the structures. These steps foster a positive culture shared by the broader leadership team and party management. Each of these mechanisms can be implemented, they just need a party member to lead the reform effort.

## **TEMPLATE: LEADERSHIP SELF-ASSESSMENT GUIDE**

Understanding your personal strengths and weaknesses can help you choose which leadership qualities to employ while building alliances and advocating for reform. The following two templates can guide you in your self-assessment.

Since we are not always the best ones to critically assess our qualities, it helps to engage trusted friends to help you determine on which leadership skills you can count. It is also crucial to understand how other people see you and which qualities may be disadvantageous to your cause. The following template modifies the traditional "message box" as a practical tool for critical self-assessment.



| BEST ME (INTERNAL)   | Best Me (External)   |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What am I good at?</i></li> <li>• <i>What are my values?</i></li> <li>• <i>What is my expertise?</i></li> <li>• <i>Which qualities or experiences give me credibility on this reform issue?</i></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What qualities do others admire about me?</i></li> <li>• <i>What achievements of mine do people know about?</i></li> <li>• <i>Have people supported me or my actions in the past? If so, who and why?</i></li> </ul> |
| WORSE ME (INTERNAL)  | Worse Me (External)  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What are my weaknesses?</i></li> <li>• <i>Where are my gaps in knowledge?</i></li> <li>• <i>Do any of my experiences contradict my vision for this reform issue?</i></li> </ul>                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Which of my qualities do people criticize?</i></li> <li>• <i>Have people opposed me or my actions in the past? If so, who and why?</i></li> </ul>  |

Once you have created a personal “message box” you can start defining how to leverage the “best me” from the top two boxes and work to repair or mitigate the negative qualities of the “worst me.” Start by answering the following questions:

- What is my vision?
- What style and tone do I want to promote?
- How do I want others to see me?
- What personal qualities can I use to best effect?
- What personal qualities do I need to improve?
- Who is my base constituency of support and who are my allies?
- Who do I need to win over?
- Am I the best person to win over opponents?
- How do I engage or include various groups or individuals?

## **TEMPLATE: OUT-OF-THE-BOX BRAINSTORMING**

### **Out-of-the box leadership thinking**

Create a mind map of sorts to help your creative side find unique opportunities for solving problems or addressing issues. Leaders distinguish themselves by proposing interesting, new, and bold ideas. But don’t be reckless.



In the box below, write the problem or issue to be addressed. Inside the box, list all the standard approaches or solution.

Outside the box, consider unorthodox approaches and list positives and negatives for each approach. Be creative, be outlandish. You may find that combinations of approaches, or the positive aspects of them, emerge as the foundations for a multifaceted approach.

**Our party does not have representation in the south**

Identify a local representative to promote the party,  
and be our eyes and ears.

Hold caucus meetings in the south.

Engage southern communities in developing a political strategy for  
the party and caucus group.

**Without support in the south we cannot grow our voter appeal**

**Ignore the South**

**Positive:** We will not expand needed resources in an area we have no support.

**Negative:** We will not grow our voter base in the South.

**Negative:** We'll be deceived as a regional, not national party.

**Appoint an internal party commission to engage with voters in the south**

**Positive:** Our profile will be raised. We can have big media, splash, advertising our commitment to the south, and grow our support from voters.

**Negative:** We do not have the financial resources to spend if this is not successful. My reputation is at risk if the group achieves very little.

**Appoint a prominent Southerner, even from outside the party, to be shadow minister for the south**

**Positive:** Demonstrates we are serious about engagement in the south.

**Negative:** Current supporters and members of caucus may resent the amplification of the south given we have little or no support.

**Going Forward**

1. Since we have no elected members from the south, the party will appoint a shadow minister for the south from the business community or civil society. S/he must be known in the south and be willing to contribute to our efforts in parliament.
2. One of their primary duties will be to identify a six person advisory commission to operate on a voluntary basis from the south. The six will conduct town-hall meetings with the shadow minister, and inform the party of attitudes in the south. They will also facilitate voter engagement opportunities for the party and caucus.
3. This model will be described as a pilot program to party members not from the south and, if successful, will be rolled out in all other regions.





## Gender Equality

**"If they don't give you a seat at the table, bring a folding chair."**

*Shirley Chisholm*





## IMPORTANCE OF REFORM: GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THIS SECTION

The full and equitable participation of women in public and political life is essential to building and sustaining strong and vibrant democracies. Gender equality will not happen by accident; it requires deliberate strategies and leadership to ensure that women are equal partners in public and private life. Political parties have an essential role in promoting and safeguarding women's participation in public life.

Although this section is about gender equality, political parties should also prioritize strategies for the inclusion of other marginalized groups. Internal diversity contributes to stronger, more successful political parties to which citizens can relate. The next section of this document examines the ways parties can be more inclusive of diverse opinions.

Women constitute half the world's population, yet in 2019 they make up less than one-quarter of global elected representatives in national parliaments<sup>1</sup>. Although the rate of women's representation has doubled in the last 20 years, many of the recent gains are due to the introduction of gender-targeted quota systems and legislated sanctions or incentives for political parties to nominate a minimum number of women candidates in elections.

Political parties are the "gatekeepers" of much that is discussed, decided, and delivered in political life. This section examines how political parties can, should, and are reforming beyond their legal requirements. The case studies demonstrate that change requires persistence and courage to be the first one to push boundaries. Determined reformers working to change internal culture and perceptions often endure opposition, including hostility and harassment. Sustainable gender equality in politics requires parties to dismantle barriers and build internal cultures that welcome everyone.





This section will explore these themes with the following:

- **Setting the reform context:** Sharing the Road
  - Breaking Down Barriers
  - Beyond Candidates
  - Formal Mechanisms for Reform
  - Informal Mechanisms for Reform
- **Case Study:** Getting to 45 percent: Changing Politics for Women in the U.K.
- **Case Study:** Fitting in and Fighting for Gender Equality in Morocco
- **Reform Scenarios:** Gender Equality
- **Tips for Reform**



## SETTING THE REFORM CONTEXT: SHARING THE ROAD

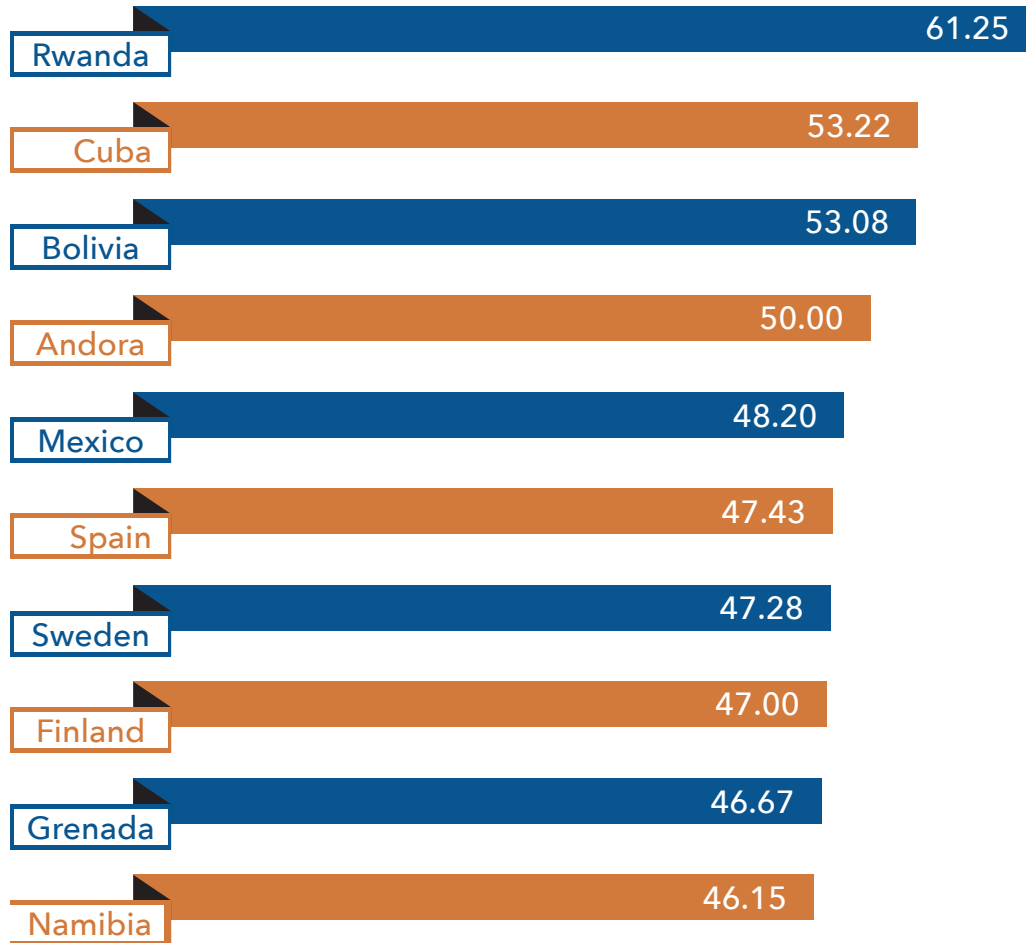
### Breaking Down Barriers

Barriers to women in politics are unique compared to their male peers. They include structural and institutional obstacles like the election system itself (women fare better in proportional representation election systems), punishing working conditions of unpredictable schedules, late-night sittings, and distances between national capitals and home. There are also cultural and social barriers that contribute to women's hesitation to put themselves forward for elected office. These include the continued and overwhelming caring responsibilities not faced by male aspirants, lack of access to financing, lack of networks, public perception of a "woman's role" and, increasingly, physical and psychological abuse and threats online and in person. Women around the world face these barriers to some degree when contemplating political engagement.

One response to the barriers women face getting elected was the implementation of quotas, often referred to as "temporary measures." Seen as controversial when first introduced forty years ago, quotas are now widely accepted as advancing the pace of women elected to national legislatures globally. In 2019, 78 countries around the world have [legislated quotas or reserved seats for women](#). Quotas are, however, a small solution to increasing women's political participation. Since less than 25 percent of the world's nationally elected officials are women, clearly more is needed.

Of the ten states ranked highest for women's election to national legislatures, only one has reached its top ranking by mandating women's representation with legislated quotas – Rwanda. In five of the top ten countries, political parties have led the way by implementing voluntary quotas. Worldwide, over 100 political parties in 53 countries have voluntary measures to increase the number of women candidates and officials in party structures. While many political parties have made an effort to promote women as candidates, several fail to act beyond the legal requirements of legislated quotas.

Top 10 countries with highest % of women in lower or unicameral chamber



Source: [Inter-Parliamentary Union \(IPU\)](#)

## Beyond Candidates

While political parties are gatekeepers for political aspirants and drivers of policy, they also represent the best vehicles for driving the change needed to break down the barriers women face in politics and public life. The only way to achieve gender equality in politics and governance is by political parties taking this aspect of reform seriously and actively promote women as influential decision-makers within all levels of their organizations. The most transformative commitment to gender equality within political parties goes beyond candidate selection.



Around the world, political parties and party leaders (women and men) are providing leadership to help tear down the barriers. As demonstrated by grand moves such as appointing gender-equal cabinets or executive bodies (as recently seen in Canada, Spain and Ethiopia), to selecting the first woman to lead a capital city in a conservative Muslim country (Tunis, Tunisia), champions of gender equality in politics understand that meaningful and sustainable change will come from leadership within political parties. Political parties around the world have supported legislation or introduced internal reforms that, if not prioritizing gender equality, facilitate the increased participation of women. Internal reforms can be formal or informal in nature and start at any level of the party.

### Formal Mechanisms for Reform

Formal mechanisms include changes to party rules or by-laws, formal or official schemes set up by the party or its institutions, or other structural changes. While parties may not always implement rules, it is impossible to hold them accountable for rules that do not exist in the first place. Reformers around the world have now set their sights on establishing gender parity on all committees and bodies in political parties. In Morocco, for instance, political parties must establish gender parity committees to advise their leadership on measures to achieve gender equality within the internal structures. In Bangladesh, all political party bodies must comprise at least 30 percent of women. As of 2019, none of the major parties in Bangladesh had implemented this quota, but it provides reformers with a tangible (and legally binding) target for change towards which to build. Other examples of formal mechanisms include: the Australian Labor Party, which has a parity policy where each gender must be represented by not less than 40 percent in elections; the German Green party that has a female/male co-chaired presidency; and the German Christian Democratic Union that reruns internal elections if the 33 percent quota for women is not met. As the following case study shows, the Labour Party in the United Kingdom made significant gains with All Women Shortlists. Since not all parties strictly adhere to formal rules, reformers must be vigilant in holding party leaders accountable and using the tools of official statutes and bylaws to insist that parity mechanisms be implemented.



## **Informal Mechanisms for Reform**

Although most political parties are no longer, strictly, “old boys clubs,” many continue to operate with opaque traditions and unspoken norms that exclude outsiders, including women. These informal ways of operating usually obscure real barriers to women’s participation. An examination of a party’s internal, informal culture can help reformers identify practices that are unfriendly to women. Women, who continue to bear a load of private caregiving responsibilities in many societies, are often unable to attend evening meetings of party committees. Many political parties’ processes are highly confrontational, involve debates without rules or records, contain an unnecessarily high level of antagonism, or even include rhetorical insults or physical confrontation. These behaviors contribute to the exclusion of women. Observing and documenting how a political party conducts its business can uncover informal barriers to women’s engagement and be a starting point for defining needed reforms.

Conducting a gender audit or assessment of the party is a valuable tool to understand the barriers. A political party that is women-friendly keeps updated records of party voters, members, activists, functionaries, and elected officials that are *segregated by gender*. Beyond the numbers, the commitment to gender equality includes positive measures to promote the equal participation of women in political parties such as recruitment strategies, the external promotion of women as spokespeople and subject experts, capacity building, quotas or targets at all levels of the party; measures that the party implements. Political parties that embrace gender equality as a party value, and promote equality policies in party manifestos and election platforms, demonstrate meaningful participation and contribution of women within the party. An assessment can identify gaps and provide direction for reform measures.

As noted in an earlier section of this document, opportunities for reform are unpredictable and often take us by surprise. Reformers need to be ready to respond using the most appropriate tools. Too many party leaders, when confronted with the unequal representation of women, throw up their hands and claim that women are uninterested in participating or the party is unable to find qualified women. One way to counter these excuses is to provide information on women who are qualified and available to participate. In 2011, a senior Moroccan party activist, Hakima el Haite formed the *Connectin-Group* to build a network and, more importantly, a database of women who were qualified and willing to participate in political parties, government, and the civil service. Women who participated in the program received training and networked on strategies to be seen and heard as capable of participating in public life. Similar tactics to develop databases of qualified and interested women are being replicated by politically active women around the world, including most recently in Lebanon and Libya.



## CASE STUDIES

### Getting to 45 percent: Changing Politics for Women in the U.K. Margaret Curran

When I entered politics in the 1980s, politicians – especially women – who argued that women’s equality was a political issue faced pushback in public. Despite having a woman Prime Minister (Margaret Thatcher), many did not view the problems of childcare and domestic violence as real or critical political issues for debate in parliament. Many politicians, journalists, and citizens trivialized women who demanded more attention to these issues and dismissed them as one-issue politicians. But broader changes were occurring in society; as more women began working outside the home, they became more active in public and political life. My party used this increased participation to its advantage and made a more significant effort to align the cause of women’s rights to Labour’s values and policies. I saw firsthand how this could resonate with citizens, and I was forever committed to helping my party deliver policies that aligned with its values.

By the late 1990s, Labour’s failure to increase the number of women members of parliament (MPs) led to calls for change inside the party. Demands that there should be places for women in the elections to the Shadow Cabinet produced a fierce reaction. It was a clear example of the personal attacks that assertive women in politics endure. My colleagues and I fought for equal opportunities and resources to raise the internal and public profile of women candidates and officials, arguing that no party materials (party pamphlets, graphics, platform documents) should exclude women. This demand sparked a lively internal discussion, which contributed to a substantial change in the organization’s culture. We also used this reform debate as an opportunity to make the broader case for why women had to be present and visible to communicate and engage with women voters effectively. Despite some progress, we needed a new approach if we were to get sizeable numbers of Labour women into parliament. A significant shift took place with the introduction of All-Women Shortlists (AWS).

The party introduced AWS to ensure that constituency committees selected as many women as possible for vacant and *winnable seats*, the seats that were most likely to return Labour MPs to Westminster. At the time, this was seen as a controversial policy and was bitterly opposed. However, we were able to persuade and convince key members of the party that, without bold action of the leadership, the number of women in parliament would not progress in sufficient quantities.



*Without bold action of the leadership, the number of women in parliament would not progress in sufficient quantities.*

The support of the trade unions, as well as party leaders who understood that Labour needed to change, was crucial to AWS's ultimate implementation. In 1993, Labour adopted an internal mechanism to implement AWS in the next election. Before the election, however, two men successfully challenged the policy, and in 1996 an industrial tribunal ruled that, ironically, the AWS violated the Sex Discrimination Act. The ruling did not affect the 34 women already selected but prevented any remaining AWS selections. In the 1997 election, 35 out of 38 Labour AWS candidates were elected. The party's use of AWS symbolized organizational and political modernization. It also paved the way for reform within the Scottish Labour party, which introduced the «twinning» of male and female candidates in the election to the first Scottish parliament in 1999.

Nonetheless, resistance to positive measures persisted, and the industrial tribunal's ruling meant the party was unable to use AWS in the 2001 general election in the UK. The decrease in the number of women MPs elected in 2001 demonstrated the need for positive measures. In 2002 the Labour government introduced legislation allowing political parties to use positive discrimination in the selection of candidates until 2015. The Equality Act of 2010 extended this date to 2030.

## **Lessons Learned and Advice for Future Reformers**

It has been a long fight with many setbacks. However, a central commitment to the full equality of women in our party and government has galvanized thousands of women and men from across the country to come together and deliver fundamental changes in our organizational structure, policy, and campaigning. Women now make up 45 percent of Labour MPs, there is gender parity in the Shadow Cabinet, and there are mechanisms for equal representation on our governing boards and local management committees.

At the beginning of my political career, I never thought that the introduction of formal mechanisms to ensure women's representation was possible. When we first worked to introduce



AWS, there was such bitter opposition, that equal representation seemed an impossible goal. But through clearly focused arguments, delicate use of soft skills, and with some support in broader society, we persuaded the party leadership that AWS was not just an excellent internal policy, it was also an effective way to reach out to women voters. AWS helped our party succeed electorally, and established the principle of positive action. The demonstrated effectiveness of positive-action measures helped the party develop popular policies on representation and inclusion, mirroring our supporters' priorities and our party's values.

On reflection, progress would not have been possible without the introduction of a formal mechanism. We still have some way to go, in the UK, and democracies around the world. The AWS policy has not had the same impact on women of color, and municipal-level parties have not implemented the mechanism. But we have made a difference and a lasting impact. Progress is hard, but the future is bright.

## Fitting in and fighting for gender equality in Morocco

**Khadija El-Morabit**

When I was the president of the women's wing (WW) of Morocco's Mouvement Populaire (MP) party, we faced an enormous amount of informal discrimination at all levels of the party. Despite being a member of the party's Political Bureau, the party denied me representation on – or even access to – decision-making processes at local, regional, and national levels. From the beginning, I knew it would be an incredible challenge to have the respect, agency, and support from the party leaders to carry out the work that other members of the WW and I aspired to do.



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I was left to personally advocate for the WW's and my needs to successfully conduct outreach activities, or hold policy forums with citizens in rural areas. In executive meetings, party leaders responded to discussions around retaining access to key party leaders, financial and human resources, with sarcasm, then denial, and finally outright refusal.



However, despite these shortcomings, the board of the WW lobbied internally across the party with women members to build coalitions of supporters and advocates who dedicated themselves to initiating new reforms targeting our internal party gender policies. In January 2014, we communicated with the party leader and the Political Bureau about our reform initiatives. We requested the party commit to achieving gender parity on all of its internal bodies and external institutions, including the National Board. We believed that women should be equally represented in all decision-making groups and all party activities, and committed ourselves to see this vision through. The WW organized an official meeting with our party's parliamentarians to get their support as well. We thought the national caucus would be an essential ally. We also hosted a national conference specifically dedicated to gender equality within the party. More than 100 women attended from all regions of Morocco, and we developed a comprehensive list of recommendations for every group and institution within the party. We distributed these recommendations to the Executive Board, the party leader, and every member of the party via email.

I, personally, attempted to hold a series of talks with the party leadership and find a resolution to a growing, nonsensical internal discussion around the need and utility for a Women's Wing. During this time, my male colleagues and their allies in the media subjected me to unethical behavior and harassment. It was incredibly disappointing when other members of the WW and I realized that the party would never keep its promises about the resources and functional capacity of the WW, let alone intervene to help counter the personal attacks or provide me with protection. I faced the leadership team and the political bureau members about this discrimination and resigned from my position as president of the women's wing. I ended up confronting the leadership team, and members of the political bureau, about the level of discrimination my colleagues and I received within the party, and in public, since our proposal to ensure gender parity.

In the end, the WW never received an official written reply or acknowledgment of our recommendations. However, shortly before I resigned, a colleague reminded me of Article 9 of our party's internal bylaws that states, «The party **seeks to achieve** 30 percent of women's representation within its national and regional bodies in the light of the progressive realization of the principle of equality in accordance with the provisions of Article 26 of the Political Parties Organization Law.» **Seeks to achieve** is the critical phrase that abdicated party officials from responsibility.

A change of strategy was needed. I began to recognize that, at every step of women's political empowerment movement within my party and Morocco's political system, specific and careful language in bylaws and legislation is needed to unequivocally state that women's representation in politics should be in line with the constitution.



## Lessons Learned and Advice for Reformers

My experience as a President of a Women's Wing in Morocco has unfortunately given me a unique perspective of how party leaders consider party subgroups as a seasonal asset. Too often, they are not appropriately valued for their policy expertise or given equal representation on decision making bodies. Yet, come election time? Women's Wings, Youth Wings, and local branches are expected to break record outreach figures and be the face of targeted media campaigns. Party Congresses are, essentially, the only other venue where the party needs women's and other «diversity» votes to elect a new party leader or board member.

It was a shame to see all of our internal advocacy efforts and outreach with special interest groups come short of the goal, in large part because of a lack of support from leadership and political will from our party's board. The Party of Authenticity and Modernity (PAM), which achieved gender parity in their political bureau in 2016, was the only Moroccan party to achieve gender parity on an internal board or committee. In the 2016 general election, PAM also had 30 seats specifically for youth candidates, 29 of which were female. My own and other parties' women's wings continue to be active in party life, contributing to most political debates, holding constituent outreach events, and organizing roundtables with locals to discuss local and national issues. Auxiliary groups like women's wings need to embrace the role of change-agent inside their parties. Invest yourself in opportunities to build expertise in knowledge areas and cultivate external alliances, which help drive policy conversation. Make yourself, and your group or coalition of supporters, a necessity in a specific policy area and citizen engagement activities. It may take multiple efforts, different strategies, and inevitably much time – but you can build leverage. You only have to be creative.

My personal experience leads me to believe that it is crucial for women in politics to talk courageously about their experiences, especially the negative ones, and to share them among other women. Unfortunately, in the Arab world, women have to sacrifice much to be political. We are forced to risk more, fight harder, and work longer hours to stand on equal ground and have our voices heard. Women in politics pay dearly for their engagement, integrity, and commitment to their values and principles. My advice to current and future women members of political parties is to work closely with civil society and use issue activists to put pressure on party leaders and legislators for new reforms. And then there are the media. For all of their flaws, traditional and social media are still the best tools at your disposal to educate and change the broader culture about the stigmas of women in politics.

The political atmosphere will remain dominated by men if political reformers do not change the opinions and mindset of the public. I may not have achieved the full potential of our re-

form as first envisioned, but I started a conversation and put a spotlight on issues that needed attention. We need to discuss gender stereotypes at all levels of politics to adequately fight them. Reform begins with individuals demanding accountability and equality. I would advise all women in politics not to give up the fight, to stand up for their rights, to get out of their comfort zone, and raise their voices for change for the benefit of future generations.

## REFORMER SCENARIOS: MAKING GENDER EQUALITY A REALITY

**Reform Goal:** To install a new approach towards ensuring that our internal dialogues and committees are inclusive and to break the power grip of the old male guard.

**Hopes:** To improve the inclusive nature of meetings and internal committees by creating new approaches to chairing, organizing, and moderating internal discussions and groups.

**Concerns:** Tone is something we overlook, yet it makes a crucial difference in who can participate or not in a debate about the party. Privilege is preventing the majority of male chairs from realizing their approach and attitude can stifle debate.



**Party Issue:** There is a very male-dominated culture inside our party, and it is actively preventing more women from speaking up in meetings and taking over the reins of power. If we can influence how people chair meetings, by maybe installing an enforceable and inclusive code of conduct, we can improve the quality of internal discussion and ensure the debates are truly representative.

**Reformer: General Secretary**



## Reform Challenge (1 of 2): *“How can we get powerful people to buy into this idea?”*

**Perspective from Margaret Curran, Former UK Labour MP:** Internal cultures and habits are hard to change. When people get used to the mechanics of routine events – like meetings – they are often unaware of how their behavior might negatively impact or exclude others. I remember trying to introduce changes to how we conduct meetings to make them less male-dominated and more inclusive as a young Labour member. Our proposals were met with much resistance but are now commonplace, and I think most people would say they worked.

So, my first suggestion would be to stay firm in your belief that this is meaningful reform and will be valuable for the party – do not let others say it is not a priority. Secondly, you have to recognize that you will not be able to persuade everyone but work towards persuading some key allies who have expressed publicly or privately their support for greater inclusion in the organization. Hold people accountable! If they have campaigned on this issue, they should be your ally internally. Thirdly, have a list of specific proposals ready that will make the crucial changes you are seeking. Be prepared to speak on these reforms at any time, to any audience. The party has to ensure there is a balance in its structures and its communications and public representations.

## Reform Challenge (2 of 2): *‘How can we create a code of conduct and begin to deal with the difficult personalities in the room?’*

**Perspective from Iain Gill, International Party Expert:** As a trainer and strategist, I spend a lot of time chairing meetings, speaking on panels, or training groups from 10-50 people at a time. Setting the right environment and tone is incredibly important to ensure inclusiveness. To do this, I immediately scan the room when I first enter a meeting or training for the three most difficult personality types, which I call, lions, mice, and bears.

**The Lions:** Some people need the spotlight all the time. They attempt to attract attention with every word and gesture. They have a comment on everything, relevant or not, and always try to have the last word. They tend to interrupt when others are speaking. It’s really important to lay ground rules at the start of the meeting, and I do this by setting four house rules:

1. No phone usage during meetings. These are a distraction for dialogue and create unnecessary barriers.
2. No speaking over another person. If you want to speak, raise your hand.
3. Respect people's differences of opinion. I would encourage people to take a few seconds to look around the room and acknowledge the different people in the room and to be respectful in how we speak to each other.
4. If and when a "lion" becomes disruptive, do not let it go unnoticed. Address that person immediately and remind them of the house rules.

**The Mice:** Some people are naturally reserved and prefer to keep silent. These people are usually the most intelligent and strongest contributors. There is a fine line between encouraging them to speak and making them feel uncomfortable by putting them on the spot. An easy solution to address this is to periodically ask everyone, individually, for input, observations, and thoughts.

**The Bears:** Certain individuals find people who are unaligned or undecided and try to recruit them to their side. Too often, the result is counterproductive and simply creates a pack mentality that undermines the rest of the room. A quick solution is to question the instigator about his or her concerns publicly and then try to bring the instigator and his or her subgroup members back into the group.

Creating a code of conduct or a formal set of rules to build a more inclusive internal structure is a beneficial reform because:

- It enhances internal debates and brings more ideas to the forefront;
- It can make party members who are not in positions of power or influence feel valued; and
- It will help reduce unconscious bias.

## Lessons Learned and Advice for Reformers

- Develop specific proposals to change internal party culture and routine events like meetings.
- Create ground rules to encourage the equal and respectful participation of everyone in the room.



## TIPS FOR REFORM

Changing an internal culture that has endured for decades is hard. Many champions of gender equality, including many men, do not see the barriers or understand how behavior prevents equal participation in political parties. Reformers must point to harmful practices and assertively articulate where discrimination occurs. Sometimes “naming and shaming” behavior forces people to examine their complicity in perpetuating unintentional exclusion.

Here are tips for breaking down the barriers so that men and women can participate equally in political parties.

### Empowerment at the Individual Level

- Identify key party members that can build an internal grassroots coalition to advance gender equality measures within the party and expand the pool of allies, including men and party leaders, who support these measures.
- Conduct awareness-raising and training programs for all party members to learn and understand the various facets of gender equality within the party, including participation in party committees and bodies, promotion of external spokespersons, negative and harmful behavior towards women, and policies that reflect the priorities of men and women equally.
- Use soft diplomacy and closed-door conversations with those in power to promote women’s advancement within the party and address any honest concerns party members and leaders may have (potential loss of control, logistics, awareness of other changes that may occur). These closed-door conversations can also affirm what will stay the same and power structures that will remain in place—a key aspect to those who worry about the impact of dramatic shifts and changes. Open and honest dialogue that affirms and addresses legitimate concerns is the foundation from which to push for broader support and secure tangible and sustainable changes.
- Encourage women to run for office at national, state, and local levels.

## Effecting Norm Change at the Institutional Level

- Conduct an assessment or gender audit of the political party to identify any institutional barriers and supports.
- Set targets for women’s participation in party conventions. Include topics related to the party’s work for equality, non-discrimination, and the eradication of political violence in the issues discussed at party conventions. These topics should be integrated into the general meetings and not conducted as separate, side sessions.
- Establish an equal opportunity committee (a monitoring and implementation body) responsible for verifying party bylaws that address equality between men and women are observed, ensuring improvements take place, and updating the bylaws to reflect new norms as they are established. Men and women should serve on the committee in equal numbers.
- Build strong relations with civil society organizations, government institutions, and international organizations to promote women’s representation. Consider including women who have respected roles in the community, religious institutions, connections to multiple interest groups, or have worked in-depth in key policy implementation fields (such as education, health care, family care, or infrastructure).
- Create policies to provide for childcare, elder care, family care, and other initiatives that support women and men participating in party activities.
- Maintain membership databases and collect reliable gender-disaggregated data on party membership, leadership, influence on decision making, and candidates.
- Formalize social media action plans to recruit women party members and promote women candidates, in addition to grassroots efforts.

### TEMPLATE

Gender assessments or audits of political parties should include a review of existing party documents (statutes, bylaws, written rules and procedures, and party policy documents), interviews with key party officials and activists (female and male), and focus group discussions. It is also useful to interview external stakeholders to provide an outside view of how gender-inclusive others perceive the organization.

The following template provides a basic guide to the lines of inquiry of a gender assessment and is by no means exhaustive. NDI has vast resources on women’s political participation, including [a comprehensive toolkit](#) to assess and evaluate political parties.





**SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR GENDER ASSESSMENT**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>BASIC PARTY STRUCTURE</b></p>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>How many total members of the party are women and how many are men?</i></li> <li>• <i>What leadership positions are held by women?</i></li> <li>• <i>What is the structure of the party? What is the membership, broken down by women and men of internal party committees and decision-making bodies?</i></li> <li>• <i>How many sub-national party branches are led by women and how many by men?</i></li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>WOMEN INSIDE THE PARTY</b></p>            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>List all national party positions held by women.</i></li> <li>• <i>Are there mechanisms to increase the representation of women in party structures and decision-making bodies?</i></li> <li>• <i>Does the party have an equal opportunities/parity committee that monitors and implements regulations for equal representation of women?</i></li> <li>• <i>Does the party provide mentoring or training opportunities for women in the party?</i></li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>POLICY DEVELOPMENT</b></p>                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Does the party consult with party members as part of the policy development process?</i></li> <li>• <i>Does the party consult equally with female and male members in the policy development process?</i></li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>ELECTIONS AND CANDIDATE SELECTION</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What is the party's process for the selection of candidates in general, according to the statutes or bylaws? Are these processes always respected?</i></li> <li>• <i>How many current elected members of the party, at all levels, are women and men?</i></li> <li>• <i>In the last three elections, how many candidates were women and how many were men?</i></li> <li>• <i>What kind of resources does the party provide to candidates before and during elections (training, financial, etc)?</i></li> <li>• <i>What mechanisms are in place to guarantee that women candidates are put forward by the party?</i></li> <li>• <i>Are there other strategies, either based in the party statutes or more informal, to promote or recruit women as candidates for the party? Are the strategies implemented?</i></li> </ul> |



|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the party conduct training for women candidates to improve their chances of being elected to office?</li> <li>• Does the party financially support women candidates in equal amounts as male candidates?</li> <li>• Does the party have a database and/or lists of women qualified for elected and appointed political positions at different levels of government?</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>WOMEN'S<br/>WINGS/<br/>BRANCHES</b></p>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the party has a separate women's section, does the section:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have adequate, physical office space?</li> <li>• Have a budget allocated from party funds?</li> <li>• Have the ability to independently raise additional funds for women's branch activities?</li> <li>• Freely elect its leadership?</li> <li>• Set its own program and priorities?</li> <li>• Have the right to open inter-party or public discussions on gender equality issues?</li> <li>• Formally participate in the recruitment and nomination of candidates for elections?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Does the women's section consult women members as input into the policy development process?</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>EXTERNAL<br/>PROMOTION<br/>OF GENDER</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the party promote positive images of women politicians when developing messages to the media and when selecting party spokespeople?</li> <li>• Is gender equality mentioned as a party value in party documents?</li> <li>• The last time that your party was in power, did the party nominate women for high-level or cabinet-level government positions?</li> <li>• Does the party take gender into account when considering appointments for high-level or cabinet-level government positions?</li> <li>• Does the party encourage its elected members to participate in existing women's caucuses in legislative bodies?</li> <li>• Currently, which of the party's elected women members are heads of committees, caucuses or other legislative groups?</li> <li>• Does the party ensure that elected women representatives receive adequate training to carry out their duties?</li> <li>• In the last five years has the party proposed any legislative initiatives that address the needs and concerns women in your country?</li> </ul> |



INTERNAL  
CULTURE AND  
VIOLENCE  
AGAINST  
WOMEN

- *Does the party have guidelines in place to regulate behavior between members? Are there rules that prohibit members from physically or verbally attacking each other?*
- *Does the party leadership have a formal mandate to prevent or stop harassment, physical or sexual violence, threats or coercion from happening within the party?*
- *Is there a party body/ombudsman where party members can lodge anonymous complaints about negative behaviour?*
- *Have women party members ever reported violence against them from other members of the party?*



# Including Citizens in the Reform Journey

**"Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."**

*Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.*





## THE IMPORTANCE OF REFORM AND THE ROLE CITIZENS CAN PLAY

In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, citizens are rejecting outdated models of party-citizen relationships. Social media and digital platforms enable party members and voters to engage in discussions of process and policy directly, and to participate in and influence politics. For modern political parties, inclusive and transparent decision-making is good politics. When organizations engage internal members and external stakeholders, the decisions or policies developed as a result of that consultation are more durable and compelling than ones imposed without consultation.

Political parties advocate certain policy positions as a means to distinguish themselves from opponents, as a marketing tool to promote their party and as a device to recruit members. A policy, however well-conceived and designed, is only as effective as those responsible for implementing them. Party activists are not only required to understand party policies but to contribute to their successful implementation. However, if there is no or little support for an initiative, it is doubtful to succeed. All too often, failed policies are ones developed in the absence of rigorous consultation and consideration.

This section examines the benefits of inclusion and the development of practical initiatives and policies by engaging party members and the broader public. The case studies show that greater inclusion on internal party decision-making and tough public policy choices results in increased support and trust in political parties. Citizen engagement in the processes of developing policy and party reforms is also a powerful cooption and recruitment technique.



This section will explore these themes with the following:

- **Setting the Reform Context:** Inclusion as the Engine of Reform
  - Inclusion is the Cornerstone of Representative Democracy
  - The Benefits of Consultation
  - The Value of Openness
  - Engaging Citizens in a New Way
  - Innovations in Citizen Engagement
- **Case Study:** Elections within SDP Croatia: Installing Democracy in a Democratic Party
- **Case Study:** Bringing Citizens Onboard for Tough Decisions
- **Reform Scenarios:** Voter Engagement
- **Tips for Reform**

## **SETTING THE REFORM CONTEXT: INCLUSION AS THE ENGINE OF REFORM**

### **Inclusion is the Cornerstone of Representative Democracy**

Quite often, we view processes of democracy in terms of competition – competition of ideas, electoral competition, or competing policies. Democracy, at its roots, is not a competition; it is a system of accommodation. It allows us, each with different perspectives, to contribute to the progress of our institutions and how they interact with us. When a democratic representative is elected, the office held by the representative is more important – and more durable – than the individual holding the office. She or he is supposed to represent the aspirations of every constituent. Unfortunately, the extremes of competition in elections often distort the nature of representative democracy. Voters sometimes do not accept the person selected, or the person elected takes punitive action or shows a preference for one group over others. These behaviors undermine the fundamentals of democratic systems.

Political parties can create and implement practices within the organization that ensure no one feels they have lost, but instead, all have contributed to a collective and shared direction. Creating this internal culture often takes time and requires active listening skills and a willingness to seek accommodations. In doing so, active members feel worthy and value the space provided to participate. They are more likely to take constructive roles in supporting and building the party if they believe their perspective and effort has value.

Creating a collaborative and inclusive tone requires everyone understanding and agreeing to the rules. The rules have to be followed and allow for change when needed. In a democratic party, the rules must apply equally at all times. If the rules do not appear to apply to some individuals, others may become resentful. Resentment leads to anger and division; it produces behavior that distracts from the real work of political parties.

### **The Benefits of Consultation**

Many political parties give members some measure of access to policy-making processes. If parties rely on members and activists to promote the party and campaign during elections, they need to provide members something in return – input into party decisions. People who have invested time and intellectual capacity to shape policy are more likely to invest in the success of that policy, if not the party as a whole.



Ultimately, policy development is the product of human effort. We cannot know everything. Engaging stakeholders and expert communities in policy deliberation can make policies more efficient and practical tools. Consultation may highlight unexpected consequences, easily avoided with minor adaptations. Inclusion also enables policy-makers to take the temperature of the community, understanding how citizens will react to different initiatives. Too often, the lack of political will to implement complicated policies impedes moving reforms forward. If changes are the result of broad consultation, people will invest in the success of the plan, and political will bends more easily.

For example, in 2009, the National Assembly of Kosovo proposed a series of policies governing the legislative body, including a seemingly arbitrary plan of pay and benefits for elected officials without any prior public discussion. The public and civil society activists reacted by lashing out at parliamentarians for being greedy and self-interested. There is no question that legislatures should have policies regulating legislator pay and remuneration. However, developing a policy behind closed doors and proposing solutions without consultation is ill-advised, and the consequences can be politically terminal. Had Kosovo's lawmakers researched the possibilities and examined samples from other jurisdictions, they may have achieved their goals without incurring the wrath of an angry public. Failing to consult experts and citizens in a transparent process resulted in significant reputational damage for the political class.

## The Value of Openness

Despite their shortcomings, political parties committed to democratic values serve as the best opportunity for citizens' representation in government, where policies address their needs and priorities. For political parties to be able to perform their role in a society, it is essential to embrace and develop democratic, inclusive, and transparent procedures, be it in decision-making processes, the recruitment of candidates, or policy development. With the steady decline, across the democratic world, of the level of consistent political engagement and electoral turnout, many political parties acknowledge the need for – and benefits of – an organizational, cultural, and policy re-design, aimed at more openness, inclusiveness, and transparency.

To achieve this, parties use a handful of approaches. Some of them start with a self-assessment focused on rules and regulations in making decisions and candidacy procedures. A number have chosen to dedicate financial and human resources towards attracting new



members, re-engaging former members, and promoting internal, member-initiated grassroots activities. Many parties have increased efforts in digital communication, both within the party as well as with voters. These examples are just an illustration of the strategies and tactics parties have used to try to rebuild public trust in political parties and earn voters' confidence in the fairness of open political processes and democratic institutions.

## **Engaging Citizens in a New Way**

In an era of increasing digital collaboration and the democratization of content creation, political parties are expected to lead in “offline and online” political agenda-setting. But as politics becomes more viewed, debated, and conducted online, there are more methods and spaces for citizens to engage in political activities and express opinions without parties' direct facilitation. In many dynamic social, political, and economic environments, citizens are no longer satisfied with democracy being reduced to merely voting. People are willing to engage in the political process and eager to contribute and take ownership of policies and decisions affecting their everyday lives. The challenge for parties is to aggregate this input and activity in a manner that allows them to harness different voices and opinions into policy and electoral support.

Political parties that are aware of the profound changes in political attitudes and engagement of our societies need to offer a compelling narrative, a clear vision, and a detailed implementation strategy for their policies to rebuild public trust and voter support. Engaging citizens where they want, how they want, and when they want is one of the building blocks of a productive and successful party. Recently, parties have taken various and innovative paths toward citizen outreach. The following efforts and strategies would be beneficial for a reformer seeking to engage with outside interest groups and the public to influence their party's organizational policies, culture, or activities.

**Engaging citizens in the policy development process.** Be it online via e-consultations, or organizing town hall meetings or policy forums, look for ways to demonstrate that the policy-making process is not a privilege exercised by elite party members only. Develop methods for citizens' engagement in all stages of the policy development process. Parties often include non-affiliated experts, representatives of civil society organizations, and activists in policy forums on national, regional, and local levels. While parties tend to organize policy consultations around elections, it is essential to establish and maintain an ongoing policy dialogue with civil society and the public during non-election periods.





**Outreach to non-members & non-voters to broaden the coalition of supporters.** Political parties struggle with recruiting and retaining members. While some argue that modern parties do not need large memberships, the image of a political party as a broad platform for citizen engagement continues to be attractive and compelling. Strategies for increasing a base of supporters include:

- Introducing various membership statuses (such as members, registered supporters, members of affiliated organizations).
- Decreasing monthly membership fees or revoking membership fees for specific members' categories (such as youth, unemployed, senior).
- Holding party activities in locations and at times that are convenient for the maximum number of participants. Many women, who continue to carry the responsibility for child-care, find it difficult to attend evening activities. Parties that provide childcare and hold meetings in easily-accessed locations have a better chance of attracting new supporters.

**Using technology in addition to face-to-face engagement.** With the increasing amount of digital platforms, parties must acknowledge that citizen engagement is no longer beholden to politicians addressing voters in scheduled formats on traditional media. Political participation in the current environment includes citizens participating in public debates, contributing policy ideas, and demanding information from politicians and parties in real-time and without intermediaries. This transformation compels parties to be responsive to the public, and creatively compete to set the agenda. Parties have used strategies such as time-limited "one-issue" campaigns on social media, various online and telephone surveys on specific issues (among their members and supporters), hotlines for direct communication with elected representatives, as well as independently producing digital content intended for online distribution.

## Innovations in Citizen Engagement



Many political parties have changed and improved rules and regulations regarding voting eligibility (on party elections) and internal decision-making procedures in general, so that new members, as well as non-members or registered supporters, can gain voting rights. Parties have engaged in broadening the base of voters as well as in setting the stage for new types of elections, including primaries for candidates for parliaments, regional and local

councils. The one-member-one-vote (OMOV) principle has become one of the most widespread types of election for all party positions.

**Other examples of innovations of citizen engagement include:**

- The Madrid City Council has elevated direct citizen engagement by creating the [Madrid Decides platform](#) and the «[City Observatory](#).» Madrid Decides is an online platform where citizens can launch debates, create and vote on proposals, and even collectively allocate the city budget. Recommendations supported by at least one percent of the city population will be put to the vote by the city council, which will implement the budget recommendation with the most support. The City Observatory is a permanent assembly comprised of 49 randomly selected citizens that represent the demographic spread of Madrid. The assembly deliberates on issues facing Madrid in consultation with policy experts and produces recommendations that the council must act upon within 90 days.
- The UK's [Innovation in Democracy Program](#) is a trial of local citizen assemblies tackling difficult issues across England. The Area Democracy Forums select a random but representative sample of residents to consider and reach consensus on difficult policy questions that would traditionally be handled by the local authority. Participants will be presented with essential information and have time to debate and come to a consensus. Following the forum's recommendation, the local authority may choose to adopt the proposal as is or present it to the public for broader deliberation or decision by referendum.
- The [Danish Alternative Party](#) was founded in 2013 to create a more engaged and involved democracy. Each of the party's policies are crowdsourced, developed in "political laboratories" around Denmark, which are open to all members and citizens.

The inclusion of a diversity of voices and opinions in developing policy strengthens the chances of the policy's success. No one model stands out as the standard, but all successful processes have one thing in common; broad support by contributors invested in its success. Parties with inclusive policy-making and decision-making processes enjoy loyal activists willing to work hard to have policies implemented. But more than that, strategies developed through effective consultation and participation are more durable and make for good politics.



## CASE STUDIES

### Elections within SDP Croatia: Installing Democracy in a Democratic Party

**Karolina Leakovic**

Democratizing election procedures for candidates in parliamentary and local elections, as well as internal party elections, is a long-held priority of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) of Croatia. The ten-year evolution of this process was not, however, effortless; it was rarely linear and not without obstacles and challenges to the integrity of the party. Guiding party change-agents through the reforms was a desire to establish the SDP as an open forum for political debate and a collaborative solution-seeking organization with the public. We were united in our vision to present the SDP as a leader and reformer in democratizing party politics and, thereby, staking out our commitment to transparency, inclusion, and internal democracy as the core differences from other major parties.



*We were united in our vision to present the SDP as a leader and reformer in democratizing party politics and, thereby, staking out our commitment to transparency, inclusion, and internal democracy as the core differences from other major parties.*

Initiated by the national leadership and widely embraced by members, new electoral rules were, at first, only implemented at the national level for highest positions (Party Leader, candidate for the President of Croatia). Ahead of the 2010 Presidential Elections in Croatia, SDP organized a primary race for its candidate for president. More than 34,000 party members were eligible to choose between two candidates with a mail-in ballot. Following the presidential primaries, SDP opted for «one member, one vote» (OMOV) elections for additional party leadership positions, starting with the SDP leader elections in May 2012.

In 2014, similar rules and procedures applied to all local and regional SDP branch leadership elections, creating a unique set of problems; how could we organize such a complex multi-

level process at the same time? Who should be in charge of ensuring adherence to all rules and regulations? How could we guarantee equal access to resources for all the candidates? And most challenging of all – how could we turn the internal party elections into a battle of ideas, rather than the whole process being focused on a competition of personalities? Implementation of the new rules of procedures, developed and adopted centrally at the party headquarters, fell to the local branches.

The party distributed membership records to all the candidates, with strict procedures related to the use of members' data. Candidates were instructed to not invest their own (financial and other) resources into the campaign. Yet, the party did not create a proper oversight body and sanctions mechanism to adequately enforce the rules. In retrospect, loosely defined criteria benefited more prominent, more resourceful, and better-connected candidates, mostly incumbents. However, a handful of candidates applied low-cost campaign strategies, focusing on non-active party members and getting their vote out.

The campaign proved valuable in re-establishing trust and connections among party members, activists, and leaders. For the first time, in many cases, senior party leaders reached out to ordinary party members to seek support and discuss policies and priorities. The SDP's internal election reforms also provided us with an excellent public relations opportunity and contributed to increased trust and respect from voters beyond party members. SDP's media campaign on our policies to democratize the leadership elections triggered much attention and benefited the party in polls and subsequent elections. Many citizens now view the party as one of the most open, transparent, and inclusive in Croatia. The reforms spurred new members to join and previously non-active members to re-engage and contribute to party activities.

## **Lessons Learned and Advice for Reformers**

Reflecting on the debates around and eventual implementation of the OMOV internal election reforms, it is essential to keep in mind the pace and sequence of change. Political parties can be slow to adopt reforms around institutional procedures. Internal election reform is a complex process that might need to be implemented not as the first, but as the final step of the democratic transformation of a political organization. Building a culture of democracy inside parties requires investing in membership outreach, diversity strategies, talent management, and prioritizing inclusive policy-making over personality debates.



The SDP's democratization evolution benefited from the creation of loose party structures (youth, LGBTQI+, women's, and trade union wings) to mainstream diversity and ensured inclusive representation. These organizations serve as a bridge to citizens engaged in civil society, as well as those interested in a specific issue but may not politically ideological. A robust culture of internal democracy can also help mitigate an unfortunate side-effect of direct elections – the polarization of party members during competitive selection processes. Claiming that direct elections bring increased legitimacy, elected leaders may succumb to a «winner take all» mentality and be reluctant to foster dialogue with party opponents. Ultimately, internal democracy within political parties is not a top-down mechanism or a self-fulfilling prophecy. It requires constant efforts, discussions, and commitment by all activists.

## Bringing Citizens On Board for Tough Decisions

**Carlo Binda**

In 1991 my party was elected to government in the Canadian province of Saskatchewan. At the time I was an activist and leader within the youth wing, I would soon join the Premier's office. As a social democratic party, we campaigned in the election to expand social spending, and fix the public neglect of the government before us. But we soon realized we had no fiscal room to maneuver.

The previous conservative government had, for ten years, spent more than the province took in as revenue. Its annual operating deficits resulted in a significant debt that our government had trouble servicing. To service our debt, we had to borrow money from international banks, investors, and bond companies. But because of the size of the debt, relative to our revenue, many thought we would be unable to pay bonds when they came due, and the risk premium on our borrowings was becoming untenable. So much so that our head of government, the Premier of Saskatchewan, and his finance minister discussed dissolving the provincial government and turning everything over to the federal government.

Nonetheless, as my boss, the Premier of Saskatchewan, said in speech after speech, «We weren't elected to declare bankruptcy.»

### **Our options were dismal:**

1. Cut spending, raise taxes and blame the conservatives - Austerity by deflection and without hope.
2. Continue borrowing and financing, even as interest rates rose on our fragile bonds and

credit rating companies raised our risk profile (providing us with junk bond status as a credit rating).

3. Declare bankruptcy and hand the keys to the province to the federal government.
4. Present to the people an austerity plan that offered hope.

Of course, we took the last option. Real leadership came to the forefront during that difficult period, particularly when it came to communication. To address our dire situation, our party leadership adopted the motto, «We will do the right thing even if it means our defeat in the next election.» Spoiler alert - we won the next election with a higher number of legislative mandates.

**Principally we did the following key things:**

1. We led by example - we reduced the size of the cabinet and reduced the salaries of all ministers, including eliminating a lavish pension for elected members. The truth is, these cuts alone amounted to a minuscule amount of money, but it was symbolic - we are all in this together.
2. We cut program expenditures, dramatically, while preserving health and education spending. There were significant reforms introduced in those areas to ensure no increase in expenditure in subsequent years.
3. We raised taxes on just about everything.
4. We included the public in the process. We went to great pains to take our plan to every voter in every corner of the province - we invited any citizen to visit the ministry of finance where we would make available all the accounts. If they could propose better ideas, we would consider them.
5. We had a logical solution to an understood problem; because of our communication efforts, our plan made sense, and it was relatable. Once we balanced the budget, one-third of the surplus would go to education and health, one-third to tax reduction, and one-third to paying down the debt. We also framed the fiscal situation in terms people could understand - using household budgets as an example.

This austerity program was essential but only succeeded because our political leaders insisted on transparency, inclusion, and constant communication. Ministers and elected members were continually meeting with groups of citizens, including professional and business associations. We spent much time with party activists, as well. A crucial internal party element was regular accountability sessions with the party «faithful.» These sessions were opportunities for informed discussions about our plan - sometimes louder than polite discourse, but activists had a genuine chance to be heard.



*This austerity program was essential but only succeeded because our political leaders insisted on transparency, inclusion, and constant communication.*

Our ministers and elected members met local governments and worked with them to find creative ways of addressing significant budget cuts. As a result, for example, regional economic development authorities were created where several municipalities would share resources to attract investment or develop local advantages.

Ultimately, the key to successfully implementing this challenging program relied on citizen engagement in a two-way dialogue about realities and choices. We were open and honest that perhaps we didn't have all the answers. We provided options, and we met and listened to thousands of people. Our plan was not a «*fait accomplis*» at the level of the details. When a citizen, or group, or association made genuine and sensible suggestions, our government adapted and added the feature. But the larger plan could not be altered, and that required discipline from the party and government.

The success of this effort also required leadership by example. If we were asking people of Saskatchewan to do with less, so would the government, beginning with the Premier and his ministers. The process was often painful, testing the unity of our party: two elected members left the party to sit with the opposition or as an independent because of our policies.

Within four years, we had balanced the budget and were ready to implement our one-third return plan. It was a modest improvement but gave relief where it was needed.

While few voters will say that they wanted this austerity program, they did understand why it was necessary. As social democrats, we would have preferred to spend money on 'typical' priorities. But a more important principle was also at play in our deliberate policy choices. Had we not addressed our debt, deficit, and borrowing, it would have been bankers in Toronto, New York, and Zurich calling the shots in our economy, something no social democrat ever wants to be the case.



## Lessons Learned and Advice for Reformers

- You earn support for doing the right thing (you may not always win for doing the right thing, but your reputation remains intact).
- People will support you if they understand what it is you intend to do. Do not underestimate peoples' ability to understand difficult concepts but help frame issues in relatable ways.
- Leadership means leading by example.
- Excellent communication and genuine inclusion in decision making are essential in building consensus and support.

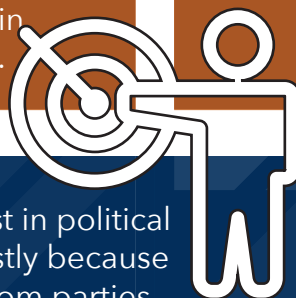
## REFORMER SCENARIOS: CREATING MEANINGFUL VOTER ENGAGEMENT

**Reform Goal:** To create and sustain a schedule of events for citizen engagement outside of election season, in urban and rural areas.

**Hopes:** Members and new voters recognize our efforts to meaningfully engage with them year-round, and it turns into more support electorally and more interest in our activities.

**Concerns:** People are going to continue to disregard us come election time if we do not find a way to rebuild our relationship with our voters.

**Party Issue:** Trust in political parties is at an all-time low, mostly because of the lack of voter outreach from parties throughout the year. Citizens rightly believe they are considered only in campaign season. We need to rebuild trust and show old and new voters who we are and what we can do.



**Reformer: Head of the Campaigns Committee**



## Reform Challenge (1 of 3): *“Convincing party membership that engaging citizens consistently makes any actual difference on election day.”*

**Perspective from Iain Gill, International Party Expert:** The most successful political campaigns are the ones that have a precise process for targeting a range of voters with a persuasive campaign message. To get to the end, a political party has to invest time, energy, and resources into the ‘development stage’ of the campaigning mechanics, which includes internal and external research, voter discussions, focus groups, testing ideas, and messages. In 2016 when I was National Election Campaign Director for the UK Liberal Democrats, the actual election period was four weeks, but the work started 52 weeks beforehand.

Politics in a democracy should be about the public; it should be about addressing problems that voters have and include a two-way conversation between political parties and people. To persuade people to vote for you, you have first to build a trust-based relationship with them and involve them. Building this report consists of a series of contacts between party representatives and the voter that includes:

- Introducing yourself in person;
- Asking what issues they care about and expressing genuine interest;
- Listening to them about their selfish requests (yes, all voters are selfish, and so they should be);
- Taking those ideas back into your party and using them to drive healthy policy discussions; and
- Inviting some members of the public to review your policy priorities or campaign message and fine-tune and improve its targeting potential.

Voters are four times more likely to vote for you if they have met you and if they feel like they know you. Sometimes the basics are what works best. Door to door canvassing is proven to be the most successful method for winning elections and is most effective when initiated well before the election campaign.

Proper planning and project management are needed to ensure a campaign runs smoothly and produces the desired results. When building a campaign schedule, start from election day and work backward – what is your main objective? List what needs to happen, by when and by whom, and with what resources. Don’t forget to include key dates and deadlines.

**Reform Challenge (2 of 3):** *“How can we get the necessary evidence to showcase to the party leadership that this idea is a worthy investment?”*

**Perspective from Margaret Curran, Former UK Labour MP:** Permanent campaign mode seems to be a new normal for parties. They operate in a highly tense environment with limited resources (financial and human). Despite the 24/7 news cycle, voters expect (and appreciate) a party’s initiative to establish and maintain contact, keep them regularly updated and ask for their opinion. Parties have invested in telephone banks and call-centers to reach out and get their message across. They use these activities to build and maintain databases on voters, with demographics and voting history.

These types of engagement can produce valuable information that can help in recruiting volunteers and future members as well. Direct and targeted emails and texts, also show that the party takes its voters and supporters seriously. When someone is willing to share her private contact data with a party activist, expressing a wish to stay in touch, do not waste the opportunity! Voters are interested in sharing their personal stories, experiences, and opinions with the party of their choice if they see it makes a difference in party politics between elections and outside campaign time. Non-formal and open branch meetings, public hearings on various issues, coffee-table discussions, “listening hours” with elected representatives, and even some free services, like free legal help or kids’ corners, can improve a party’s image and attract otherwise non-engaged, but likely-to-vote citizens.

**Reform Challenge (3 of 3):** *“We struggle to work together as a team. We have many different factions pulled in different directions, and resources are tight.”*

**Perspective from Karolina Leakovic, Vice President of PES Women:** Divided parties always face difficulties, and united parties are much more successful. Parties need to understand their most important conversation is with the voter and not with each other. Voters are not particularly interested in the day-to-day internal dynamics of party politics. They are much more interested in what you can do for them, their community, and the country. Of course, within any party, there will be a spectrum of opinions, and some parties have specific and organized factions. There should be spaces for debates within parties (such as policies, leadership choices, fundraising strategies), but it is essential not to let this distract from the overall message and work of the party.

The party still has to unite around a common program and coherent leadership. There is



growing pressure on political parties to develop and implement protocols and procedures to conduct internal debates. Formalizing the process of internal debate delivers equal and fair treatment of all involved and fosters healthy teamwork. Creating a program of activities for party members to sign up for and participate in can be useful to promote debates and give agency to a more extensive set of members. It helps bring people together and provides them with a meaningful space to learn and contribute to critical elements of the party and demonstrates your party's presence to the broader public outside of an election cycle.

## Lessons Learned and Advice for Reformers

- Voters are four more times likely to vote for you if they have met you and if they feel like they know who you are.
- Keep voters regularly updated and ask for their opinion.
- Voters do not care about the internal dynamics of political parties, so minimize internal disputes.

## TIPS FOR REFORM

Including others in decision-making requires time, energy, and resources – precious assets in any busy organization come with competing priorities. But consultation and inclusion are fundamental cornerstones of the democratic process. Since we do not consider nation-states which do not regularly consult citizens and provide those citizens with meaningful representation as democratic, why should we expect less from political parties? Political parties are essential vehicles of democratic representation and must, therefore, lead the way in including their constituencies in decision-making. Since collecting and including diverse opinions is time-consuming and seems daunting, following are tips to manage inclusive processes.

## The Bottom-up Approach to Inclusion

Inclusion is a deliberate, bottom-up process that must be nurtured, managed, and normalized as part of a political party's internal culture. Empowering party wings and local branches to engage in internal discussions and external outreach is one way to ensure consultation and inclusion are less burdensome to a few at the central level while maximizing contribution to discussions and debates. Party wings (such as youth, women, LGBTQI+, indigenous, and environmental), or clubs or branches at the local level, can be active in providing feedback

to the party leadership on internal decisions and in engaging citizens at local levels in discussions about party policy.



#### Outreach by party wings, branches, and clubs:

- Provides valuable intelligence and input to central-level leaders on opinions of party members, supporters (and opponents), and citizens in general.
- Demonstrates to citizens that at least some element of the party has time to listen, and values people's opinions.
- Creates opportunities for coalition building at the local or sector level.
- Provides opportunities to identify potential party activists and new supporters.

Party wings, local branches, or clubs should regularly hold membership-based meetings to discuss internal party initiatives, provide updates from the central party, and brainstorm on local party priority activities or policies to communicate back to the leadership.

Local or sectoral party organizations should also regularly consult with the community or issue-based constituencies, even if it requires a door-to-door effort. Since communication is a two-way activity (listening and speaking), outreach activities provide the opportunity to share information with voters and citizens as well as asking their opinions. Tools for outreach include:

- Surveys asking people for their opinions on issues and party priorities.
- Delivering party messages in-person or through social media.
- Public "town hall" meetings for citizens to debate specific issues or hear from party officials on initiatives.
- Setting up information "booths" at markets, shopping malls, or pedestrian streets.

If you can include party leadership in such community outreach efforts, so much the better. If your electoral district, for example, does not have your party representing it in the legislature or government, try to convince a neighboring district's elected member to meet with constituents.

These efforts, as small as they may seem, can help to counter the often angry allegation that parties do not care about citizens until elections roll around. Citizens and voters may not always agree with everything your party does or says, but they will appreciate that you asked for, and listened to, their opinion.



## Inclusive Policy Development is Good Politics

A good policy is developed through an intentional process of gathering information and opinions. The more deliberate and inclusive that process is, the more likely voters and party members are to assign confidence and support to the policies. An intentional process of policy development may have many stages. You should include as many people as possible in all stages. Broadly those stages are:

### POLICY DEVELOPMENT

THE STAGES OF INCLUSION





### **1 ISSUE IDENTIFICATION**

**Define** issues and problems by engaging others to **identify priorities**.

### **6 ADOPT POLICY**

**Pass** the law in the legislature or have relevant party body **approve** changes.

### **5 RE-ENGAGE TO ASSESS**

**Test** policy proposals with stakeholders and broader community to gain **support** for next stage and to limit unintended consequences.

### **2 UNDERSTAND THE ISSUE**

**Research** the problem and previous attempts to address the issue.

**Ask others** about previous experiences to learn from them.

### **3 IDENTIFY BEST TOOLS**

Determine **the most appropriate way to address the problem**. Is a new law required? Can an existing law be amended? Is regulatory change needed? Do party rules need changing?

### **4 CONSULT AND ENGAGE**

Ask **stakeholders** to identify elements of the policy, ie. young people about youth policy. Consult **experts** in the policy field, ie. doctors about health policy. Allow these groups to **contribute** to drafting.





**TEMPLATE**

The following template is a useful checklist when engaging in inclusive policy development.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>What is the issue needing addressed?</b></p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Is it a critical issue or a crisis? If so, it might require more urgent action.</i></li> <li>• <i>Is it an emerging issue, something that arises from a new internal or external policy, treaty, or agreement?</i></li> <li>• <i>Define the issue as precisely as possible</i></li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>What has been done previously to address this issue here, or elsewhere?</b></p>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Conduct research and find out what legislative or regulatory instruments impact the condition you are addressing.</i></li> <li>• <i>Have other jurisdictions or localities had to address this issue? If so, take time to understand what they did, and the impact of their actions.</i></li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>Who are the key stakeholders affected directly or indirectly by this issue?</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Map out all the people this issue affects.</i></li> <li>• <i>Include primary, secondary, and tertiary groups.</i></li> <li>• <i>For example; the stakeholders involved in a health epidemic include those primarily impacted by the disease or health issue - the patients. Secondary stakeholders might include frontline health workers - doctors and nurses. Tertiary stakeholders might include regional health authorities, pharmaceutical companies, health research groups and so on.</i></li> </ul> |
| <p><b>What policy tools are most appropriate for addressing this issue?</b></p>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Begin with the most simple solutions to identify appropriate policy tools before considering more complex or radical options.</i></li> <li>• <i>For example, is a simple ministerial directive enough to address the issue. If not, will regulatory changes accomplish your objective? If it is a more serious or new issue legislative changes may be the only solution.</i></li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>Who and when can we consult about the proposed approaches to this issue?</b></p>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>No one knows everything. Take advantage of the expert community near you to solicit advice and recommendations.</i></li> <li>• <i>If possible, consult with those most affected by the issue.</i></li> <li>• <i>Consult with those in other locations that may have done something similar, learning from their experience.</i></li> <li>• <i>Consult the professional policy and legal community, even if they are not experts in the particular issue you are addressing.</i></li> </ul>                  |



|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>Who can assist in developing the most appropriate policy tool or strategy to address this issue?</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>The more inclusive a policy development process is, the more successful the policy will be. However, for urgent issues, broad inclusion may be unwieldy and create more delay than you can afford.</i></li><li>• <i>Is policy expertise available at local research institutes, think tanks, or universities to assist in developing the details of your policy (regulations or laws for example).</i></li></ul> |
| <p><b>Once we have a policy tool, who should we consult to ensure it accomplishes the intended result?</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Once you have the tools assembled to address your issue, consult experts and primary stakeholders to ensure that your solution is workable.</i></li></ul>  |
| <p><b>What is the strategy to ensure this policy tool is formally, or informally, adopted?</b></p>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Create a roadmap describing and detailing each stage in your effort to implement a particular policy.</i></li><li>• <i>Identify key stakeholders for implementing your policy; legislative clerks, caucus and parliamentary committees, executive government, and so on.</i></li></ul>   |



# Recommendations

## FOR PARTY REFORMERS

- Chose a reform in which you have a personal investment. It will be easier to see the success and achievements made, both on a small and large scale, when there is a personal interest and motivation in the outcome of the overall reform journey.
- Use external allies to your advantage and be open-minded about who to include in a broad-based coalition of supporters. Interpersonal skills and soft diplomacy will be required to win over varying stakeholders at every step of the reform journey.
- Take advantage of the moment. Internal reform is good politics; it just needs to be framed and led by a credible reformer. Parties across the world need change agents who are committed to, and believe in, improving the function and performance of their organizations.

## FOR POLITICAL PARTIES COMMITTED TO INTERNAL REFORM

- Create formal forums for party activists at the local, regional, and national levels to present reform ideas to party leadership.
- Conduct annual assessments of the party's activities and internal structures to identify where the organization needs to reform.
- Develop an internal reform committee (with a budget) that includes representatives from local chapters, members, internal auxiliary groups, the executive committee, and civil society or nonmembers with a mandate to explore needed areas of reform and a formal process to present its findings and recommendations to party leadership.

## FOR ASSISTANCE PROVIDERS SEEKING TO SUPPORT INTERNAL REFORM EFFORTS:

- Install more conditions for party leadership within programs to:
  - incorporate the recipients of trainings into leadership positions and candidate lists;

- introduce the initiatives developed in workshops to party activists and local chapters; and
- institutionalize the internal procedures developed during programs.
- Adapt political party programs to mirror the path of reform for parties in general, keeping in mind the time and effort it takes to: overcome institutional barriers, resistant leadership and, in some cases, change a social or cultural norm before the actual implementation phase is reached.
- Structure programming around specific incentives for the party and its leadership to reform, and identify where and how local stakeholders outside the party can apply pressure.
- Recognize that trainings and workshops alone are not sufficient to change a party's behavior and organizational structure. Technical support and capacity building must be synchronized with adequate follow up and strategic planning with these change agents. Follow up activities need to be inherent within the design and budget of the party program.



## Conclusion

Embarking on a journey of internal reform is an arduous task. It requires an incredible amount of strategic planning, targeting, realistic goal setting, and lobbying – not to mention time, energy and resources. Unfortunately, there is no one-size-fits-all toolkit or plan for how to successfully implement a reform, and this document could not cover all of the strategies and how-to's needed to overcome the litany of barriers reform activists face across the world. However, we believe we have constructed the beginning of roadmap to put change agents on the right path.

Over the course of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Party Initiative, we found that transparent leadership, gender equality and citizen engagement to be the most prudent areas of reform for parties. These areas are not only directly correlated to the interests of the modern electorate, but also provide ample space for a party reformer, regardless of their position or proximity to influence, to make a meaningful difference with any reform effort. No matter how small, achieving reforms that result in improved leadership, more transparent procedures, increased inclusion, or meaningful dialogue with citizens is beneficial for parties, citizens, and democracy itself.

This guide is the concluding piece of a program that began with the hope of starting a conversation about the necessity for political parties to reflect, reform, and reengage with citizens in the 21st century as a modern political organization. After four years, we are proud of our contribution to this effort and believe there is a greater awareness and focus on this issue. We are ending this program with a guide that aims to be a starting point of a roadmap for how an individual can take the wheel and pilot change within their party. It is also our hope that this document is the beginning of a global portfolio of resources specifically designed for those individuals seeking to make political parties the organizations citizens in the 21<sup>st</sup> century need and deserve.



NDI's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Political Parties Initiative was created to help parties evolve as organizations to more effectively connect with citizens, expand their internal democracy, become more inclusive, and better adapt to the digital era. This initiative began with a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Parties Blog, which features contributions from party practitioners, scholars, and members of the party assistance community. The blog generated discussions on how parties are or should be responding to challenges presented in new political and technological contexts.

This guide is the culmination of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Parties Initiative and seeks to aid visionary, ambitious party members who may not have access to the power held by party leaderships. Taking the Wheel provides these party change agents with a roadmap for the implementation strategies and soft skills needed to navigate the arduous internal party reform process.

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