

Political Leadership Program
Latin America
November 2009

“There is no other vehicle where one can obtain so many of the necessary tools to grow as a political leader.” 2006 LP participant

Background

In recent years, public opinion polls have reflected a growing “crisis of confidence” in political parties in Latin America. Many traditional political parties have lost their popular support, and in a number of countries new organizations of political representation such as citizen groups and social movements have emerged to mobilize voters and field candidates in elections. The failure of parties to fulfill their essential role of representing and aggregating citizen interests has contributed to diminished confidence in other institutions.

In response to requests from senior political party leaders from more than a dozen countries in the region, in 1999 NDI launched the **Political Leadership Program** (Leadership Program, LP) to strengthen the leadership skills and ability of emerging political leaders to promote the modernization and renewal of political parties.

The Leadership Program of 2009-2010 will be implemented in three phases: 1) a series of national academies for 30 young political party leaders from each of the participating countries – Ecuador, Mexico and Peru; 2) six participants from each of these three countries will be selected to participate in a regional seminar to take place in Colombia; and 3) the participants of the regional seminar will return to their countries to implement concrete party-strengthening projects that will receive NDI technical assistance.

Through its ten years of existence and participant projects supported by NDI, the Leadership Program has fostered ongoing regional reform efforts with 56 major political parties and movements across the ideological spectrum, representing both governing and opposition parties in Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala,

Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru and Venezuela.

Participant Profile

Using a competitive application process, NDI selects young political leaders, who range in age from 25 to 35, on the basis of five years of political experience and a track record of leadership and political activism. The selection process emphasizes a balance in governing and opposition parties, internal party movements, gender, ideologies and key geographical regions. The Leadership Program provides a neutral setting for party leaders, even those from polarized societies, to meet and exchange views with counterparts from other countries.

Graduates of the program from 1999 through 2009 include 278 young political leaders – mayors, municipal councilors, legislators, legislative advisors, indigenous political activists and leaders of youth movements, among others. Spanish-speaking U.S. participants from the Democratic and Republican parties have also participated in the program to share their party experiences.

National Leadership Academies

“The LP seminar is like finding one of those books that has everything you ever wanted to learn but nobody had the decency to tell you of its existence.” 2006 LP participant

The program objectives are to:

- Enhance the participants’ leadership skills, including their ability to develop and carry-out party-strengthening projects; and
- Improve understanding of party development, renewal processes, mechanisms and experiences.

The national academies provide training on leadership development themes including: strategic and project planning, leadership skills, party internal democracy, transparency and

outreach to new sectors. From these academies, six participants from each country will be selected to participate in a regional seminar.

Regional Seminar

The regional seminar will take place in Colombia in 2010 and will include 18 of the participants from the national academies of Ecuador, Mexico and Peru. Drawing on high-level Latin American, European and U.S. political party experts and trainers, NDI helps young politicians develop necessary leadership skills, including communication and political negotiation. Leading political practitioners also provide an overview of mechanisms to reform or democratize parties and improve their outreach to citizens.

“The impact of this program is so strong that there has been an obvious before and after in my political career.” 2003 LP participant

Party Strengthening Projects

As part of the last phase of the Leadership Program, the young leaders who participate in the regional seminar implement projects to strengthen and improve operations within their respective parties. Project goals have included: enhancing indigenous political participation in Guatemala; reforming party statutes and internal democracy structures in Colombia; promoting women and youth participation in political parties in Mexico; and implementing party ethics codes in Colombia and the Dominican Republic.

The projects help reach a broader audience within the parties and build consensus about initiatives to strengthen parties. While genuine party reform is a long-term effort, evidence of progress is already emerging. Some specific participant results include:

Improved Transparency – With his party reform project, 2005 Dominican Republic participant Juan Carlos Guerra — Vice President of the Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD) — successfully developed a party ethics code which was approved by party leaders in November 2005. The code has been used to assess ethics violations by party leaders and members. NDI assistance included the provision of comparative

research and example ethics codes from other parties, as well as consultations with civil society and political party ethics experts.

Constituent Outreach – Carlos Daniel Fernández, a Mexican state legislator and 2006 LP participant, sought to create mechanisms to improve the constituent outreach and transparency of the Revolutionary Institutional Party (PRI) parliamentary group in the state of Sonora. With his leadership, the parliamentary group established 14 district offices that supported constituents by channeling demands and disputes to the appropriate government authority, and compiling a database of jobs to help link unemployed citizens with employers. The parliamentary group also began posting on the legislature’s webpage live transmission of legislative sessions and monthly party caucus expenditures. NDI collaborations included trainings on transparency and communication tools.

“The Leadership Program participants successfully form working teams, increase their leadership skills and potential and create a space to operate and create change within the party.” – Jorge del Castillo, Adjunct Secretary General of APRA, Peru

- Viviana Ortiz, 2006 LP participant and national coordinator of professional youth of the Radical Change party in Colombia, improved party internal communications by developing the virtual magazine “Argot” (www.revistaargot.com/revista.php). With over 10,000 subscribers, the magazine serves as the main party tool for communicating with members outside of the party website. NDI collaborations included consultations on strategic planning, fundraising, database development and alternative party communication tools.

- The project of 2007 LP participant René Galarreta, national youth coordinator of the Peruvian Nationalist Party (PNP) also resulted in the development of party bulletins, a more interactive party website and the consolidation of communication secretaries at the regional level. NDI collaborations included training party leaders, staff and members on communication

technology tools, media relations and strategic planning.

Internal Party Democratization – Colombian LP participants in the Conservative Party successfully drafted proposals and lobbied for reforms that allocate 30 percent of seats on the national and departmental leadership structures for youth, and 20 percent for women. These statutes were passed at an April 2005 party congress, and resulted in the election of a record number of youth in internal party elections in October 2005. NDI accompanied the statute reform process with advice and comparative best practices materials.

Increased Outreach to New Sectors – 2001 Dominican Republic participant Jonny Martínez invited civil society organizations to monitor the Dominican Liberation Party (PLD) primary processes in the municipality of Navarrete. The improved relations with civil society and the successful implementation of strategic planning initiatives learned through the Leadership Program resulted in an electoral victory for the PLD in Navarrete in 2002, and a 34-percentage-point improvement in the performance of the PLD in that region over the previous elections.

“The lessons that I was able to share with my colleagues helped the PAN youth movement in Chihuahua greatly. There was no budget for youth activities and no youth representatives on the party’s state committee. Using ideas I gained from the Leadership Program seminar, I obtained a budget for the youth movement, two seats for youth representatives on the state committee, and coordinated a campaign to promote the youth vote in the presidential election of 2000. As a result, we won the youth vote in the state - increasing youth voter participation from 30 to 50%.” María Eugenia Campos, 1999 LP participant

- Through her 2006 LP project, Blanca Durán, former member of the national board of the Democratic Alternative Pole (PDA) of Colombia, consolidated the “*Polo de Rosa*” – the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) sector of the party – by creating a database of affiliates, designing and implementing a web page, proposing legislative projects and organizing training workshops for

members. NDI collaborations included consultations with technology experts and Mexican LGBT advocates, and implementing training workshops with *Polo de Rosa* members. Durán is currently mayor of the Chapinero district of Bogotá.

“I am a different person since the program; I feel stronger and at the same time my role has been strengthened within the party as I have demonstrated that things can be accomplished and that although internal reform is hard, if you fight for reforms continuously, they will occur.” Ximena Cervantes, 2007 LP participant

- Training activities implemented as part of the 2007 LP project of Ximena Cervantes of the National Solidarity (SN) party of Peru inspired party leaders to establish a party training institute, the Solidarity Institute (*Instituto Solidaridad*) which conducts regular trainings for party members for free.

“With many programs, the education process remains in the capital city. Through my project and the flexibility of NDI, the new skills and methodologies were successfully transferred to the party at the regional level and resulted in change within the party leadership structures at the local level.” 2001 LP participant

“Of the many courses I have attended, this program has helped me more than the others, not only for the quality of the program but also for the assistance provided for the implementation of my project, as they not only help the participants on a theoretical level, but also in the practical application.” 2006 LP participant

NDI’s eleventh Political Leadership Program will begin with national leadership academies in Ecuador, Mexico and Peru in late 2009; and a regional seminar in Colombia in 2010. Program participants will then return to their countries to implement party strengthening projects.

Please visit the Political Party Network website at www.ndipartidos.org for additional materials regarding the Political Leadership Program or contact: Senior Program Manager Katy Mudge at katym@ndi.org; or Program Officer Robert Stromberg at rstromberg@ndi.org.