Campaign Skills Handbook

Module 1
Political Parties and Elections
Key Institutions in a Democratic State

المدارس الإقليمية لتنظيم الحملات

CAMPAIGN SCHOOLS

NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE

Introduction

Democracy is a form of government in which final authority lies with the people. In this system, citizens have the right and the opportunity to participate in decision-making either directly themselves or through elected representatives.

The principles of and requirements for democratic systems have emerged over hundreds of years. Many countries which today are considered model democracies took time to develop their systems of government and their standards and rules for governance. Critically, the core principles and key aspects of democracy are accessible, available and applicable to any society, regardless of where it may be in its state of political transition.

This module outlines some of these core principles, as well as the main features of contemporary democracies. It also describes how key players function in democratic systems and outlines best practices for political parties in a democracy.

Topics include:

1. Key Institutions in a Democratic State
2. Democratic Actors
3. Best Practices for Political Parties
4. Elements of Democratic Elections

Key Institutions in a Democratic State

Democracy is a system of government in which political leaders are chosen through regular, free and fair elections. People are given a choice of candidates and political parties who compete for the authority to govern and to serve the citizens they represent.

In this system, the political parties and politicians who are elected are accountable to the people, who are the highest authority. The legitimacy of a government is based upon the consent of the people. If political leaders do not perform well, they can be removed from office through the mechanism of elections.

There is no "one size fits all" system of democratic government. Most contemporary democracies have developed their systems of governance over time and with a fair amount of trial and error. There is a large diversity of democracies functioning today. However, even though the fabric of democracy is colorful and varied, there are a number of common themes and principles that are present in almost all democratic systems which are high-functioning and enduring. Some of these are described below.

The Constitution

In a democracy, political power is exercised within a framework of laws that are enforceable. This is known as the rule of law. The concept of the rule of law emerged in a number of societies over time, primarily out of frustration among the people that rulers were making arbitrary decisions about what was right and wrong, and that different people were facing different punishments or consequences for the same acts.

At the core of a democratic legal system is a constitution. A constitution is a written document that outlines the rights and responsibilities of citizens, and defines and limits the use of power by government institutions.[1] Because it is considered the supreme law of the land, no other laws may contradict a country's constitution.

The concept of supreme law is based on the assumption that there are fundamental principles that do not change over time. One such principle is that government should be limited in certain ways so that it cannot unnecessarily interfere in the lives of its citizens. The constitution serves as a force more powerful than the government in office, and successive governments must adhere to the rules within the constitution and operate within its framework.

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1   Some countries do not have a written constitution. The United Kingdom, for example, has a set of laws passed over centuries which it considers supreme, such as the Magna Carta, but does not have an official written constitution. The situation is similar in New Zealand.

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Another fundamental principle is that all citizens are guaranteed certain essential rights and freedoms which cannot be taken away by the state. These often include an individual's right to hold their own beliefs and to express these, the right to associate with other people, and the right to assemble and protest government actions. Citizens are obligated to exercise these rights peacefully with respect for the law and for the rights of others. Every country has its own approach to how it defines basic rights. However, constitutions limit the powers of governmental institutions to prevent them from denying citizens these rights and to ensure that, if there are conflicts or disputes, all citizens will be treated equally before the law.

Branches of Government

Constitutions also serve a highly functional purpose. They typically outline the basic framework for how a country's government will be structured and how it will operate. Each division, or branch, of government is designated its own authority and assigned specific areas of responsibility.

There are three main branches of government:

- **The Executive,** which executes laws
- **The Legislature,** which makes laws
- **The Judiciary,** which interprets laws

The exact authorities and responsibilities given to each branch vary worldwide, but a country's constitution and supporting laws define which branch deals with different key functions, such as:

- How the government can raise money
- How the national budget is decided and how money is spent
- How legislation is made
- How legislation is implemented
- How the constitution is protected
- How foreign affairs can be conducted
- How a military can be formed and who has authority over the military
- How conflicts among the branches of government are handled

The powers of each branch of government must be defined and limited so that no one branch can interfere in the work of the other. Some democracies use a system referred to as separation of powers to achieve this. The executive, legislature and judiciary are each provided with independent authority and areas of responsibility to ensure that no branch has more power than the other branches. This structure is

applied in India, Chile, Japan, Poland and the United States of America, for example. Indonesia uses a limited separation of powers model.

Other democracies do not define a strict separation among the branches of government and some, such as the United Kingdom, have a fusion of powers system in which the judiciary is separate but the executive and legislature operate jointly. In this example, all members of the executive cabinet must also be members of parliament, which means they have the authority to both make and execute legislation. Australia and Canada also use a fusion of powers system.

To prevent any one branch from becoming too powerful, and to ensure that that the rule of law and the will of the people are protected in the exercise of political power, democracies employ a system of checks and balances. This is an arrangement that allows each branch of a government to amend, veto or challenge the acts of another branch.

There are a number of examples of how this works in practice, and they are often different in presidential democracies (where the president is head of state and leader of the government) and parliamentary democracies (where the head of state and prime minister are two different people chosen by separate selection mechanisms).

In presidential democracies, the executive is often given the power to reject or amend laws passed by the legislature. The legislature is given the authority to override the president's decision under certain criteria, and the judiciary can challenge decisions made by both bodies.

In parliamentary democracies, where the functions of the executive and legislature frequently overlap, executive ministers may be subject to the scrutiny of other members of parliament (MPs), particularly if opposition parties are strong. If there is a bicameral parliament, the executive may not control both houses. In this situation, whichever body is controlled by opposition parties frequently takes on the critical role of challenging and scrutinizing the party or parties in government.
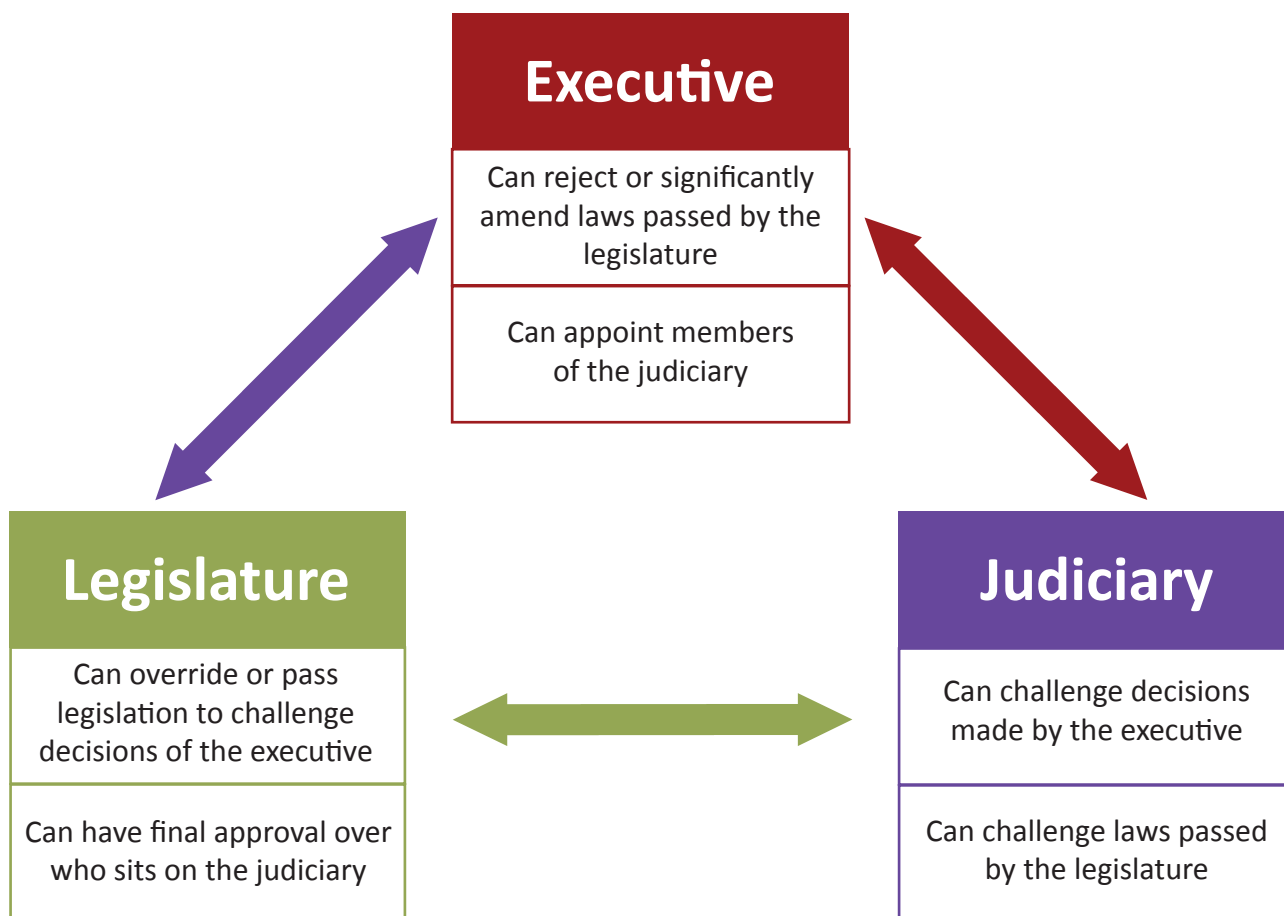
Many newer democracies are choosing mixed systems in which a prime minister and his or her cabinet are responsible for the day-to-day administration of government through ministries, but there is also a president who holds the position of head of state and has the power to nominate the prime minister, to veto legislation, and to make or approve certain judicial and governmental appointments.[2] This creates a form of checks and balances between the two offices.

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2 Stanford University, "Democracy Education for Iraq – Nine Key Themes,"
http://www.stanford.edu/~ldiamond/iraq/DemocracyEducation0204.htm.

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Other examples of checks and balances in practice include:

- The authority to authorize or veto legislation
- The power to remove a president or prime minister from office
- Votes of no confidence, to demonstrate that the majority of representatives do not support the actions of the ruling party
- Judicial review, which allows citizens to appeal to the judiciary to review a decision made by government
- Judiciary selection processes, which require approval from other branches of government
- Selection processes for cabinet members and senior government officials, which require approval from other branches of government
- Mechanisms to protect the independence of the judiciary
- Regulations on how taxes and revenue can be collected by the government
- Restrictions on who controls the security forces and how war can be declared

The diagram below illustrates how separation of powers and checks and balances works on a basic level.

Executive

Can reject or significantly amend laws passed by the legislature

Can appoint members of the judiciary

Legislature

Can override or pass legislation to challenge decisions of the executive

Can have final approval over who sits on the judiciary

Judiciary

Can challenge decisions made by the executive

Can challenge laws passed by the legislature

Branches of Government and Separation of Powers

Activity 1: Discussion on Democratic Structures

1. What are your impressions of the democratic structures discussed in this section, i.e., the rule of law, the constitution as supreme law, distinct branches of government and separation of powers? Are any employed in your country's system of government? What is your opinion about how well they work in established and transitional democracies?
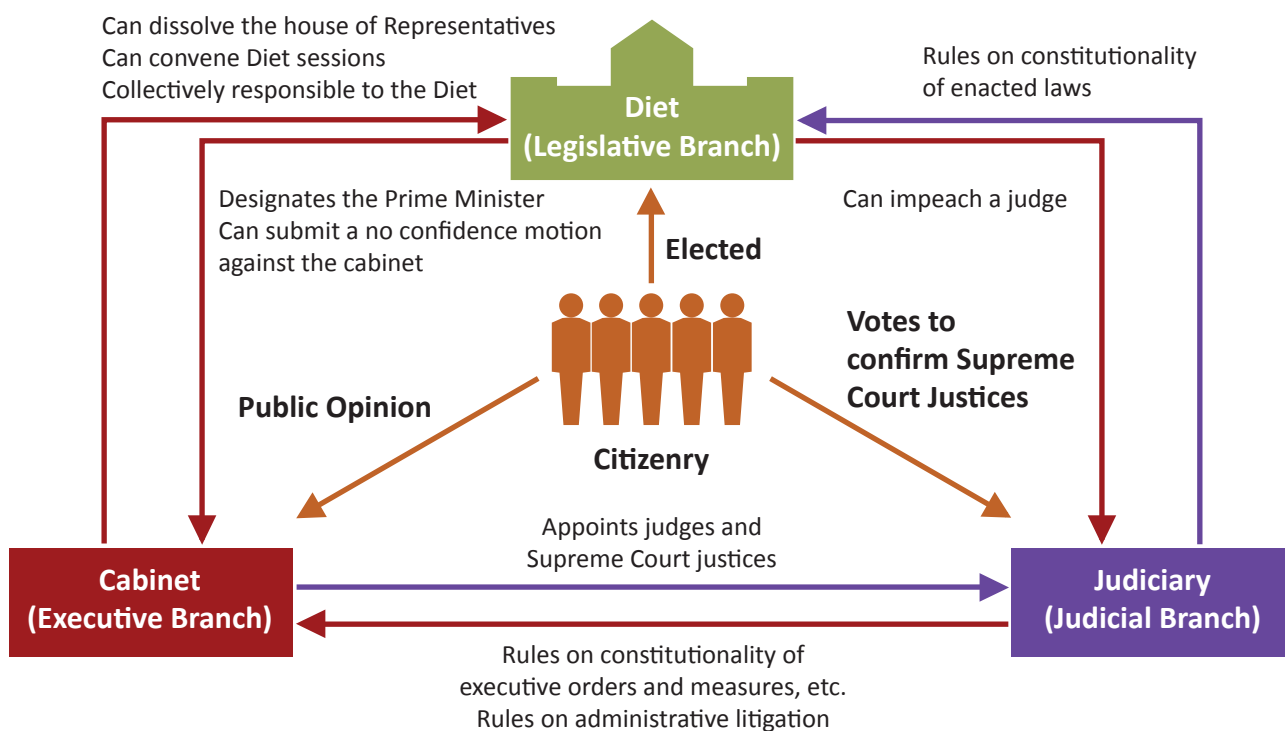
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Can dissolve the house of Representatives
Can convene Diet sessions
Collectively responsible to the Diet

Rules on constitutionality of enacted laws

Diet (Legislative Branch)

Designates the Prime Minister
Can submit a no confidence motion against the cabinet

Can impeach a judge

Elected

Votes to confirm Supreme Court Justices

Public Opinion

Citizenry

Appoints judges and Supreme Court justices

Cabinet (Executive Branch)

Judiciary (Judicial Branch)

Rules on constitutionality of executive orders and measures, etc.
Rules on administrative litigation

Diagram of separation of powers in Japan, from the House of Councillors legislature (National Diet)[3].

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2. Consider the image above, which illustrates the manner in which the branches of government are organized in Japan and outlines how separation of powers is applied in this system. In this arrangement, the citizens maintain checks on the legislature through elections, on the judiciary by voting to retain Supreme Court justices, and on the executive or cabinet through public opinion.

What are your impressions of how this would work in practice? What would citizens need to know or do to play their role in this system? In your opinion, are these checks and balances strong or weak, insufficient or sufficient?

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_____
_____
_____

Public Opinion Surveyor:
TRANSLATE PUBLIC
OPINION SURVEYOR
COMMENTS HERE.

Citizens:
TRANSLATE CITIZEN'S
COMMENTS HERE

3. The political cartoon above was published in newspapers after a scandal in the parliament of the United Kingdom in which it was revealed that some Members of Parliament were using the expenses system to increase their personal wealth. Several MPs submitted falsified accounts, collecting thousands of pounds for expenses they never incurred. Six MPs received prison sentences.

The cartoon illustrates that even in long-established democracies with checks and balances there can be abuses of power. What are your thoughts on how this should be handled in a democracy?

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_____
_____
_____

Democratic Actors

A healthy democratic society is composed of much more than branches of government. A number of actors play vital roles in a country's social, economic and governing systems, and shape the manner in which policy is made and how the government conducts itself. Several of these serve as conduits and systems of organization for the ideas and opinions of individual citizens.

This section explores the functions and influence of a number of these non-state actors, including:

- Political parties
- Civil society
- The media

These various sectors play critical roles in democratic systems, filtering and developing ideas, providing information, delivering services and shaping public policy and spending. As the tangle of arrows in the diagram below illustrates, the relationship among these actors is dynamic and can be defined by both tension and codependence at the same time. Each makes a qualitative difference in the functioning of the other organizations even when there is a conflict of ideas or thinking about how the country should be run.
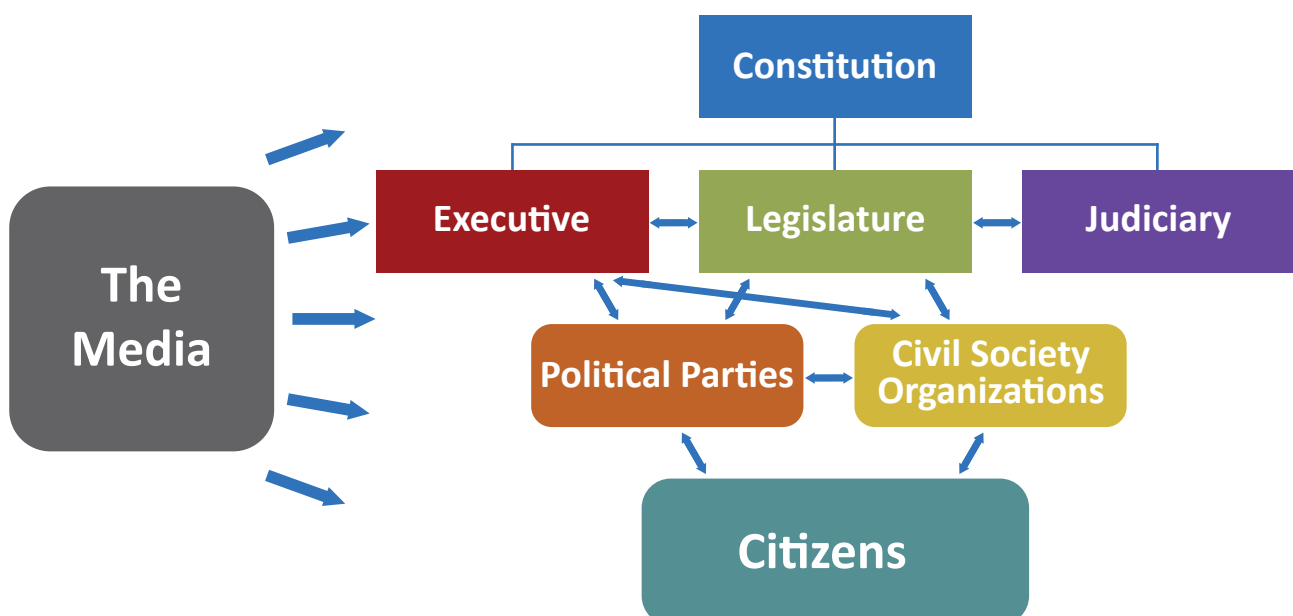
Political Parties

Political parties are organizations that bring together groups of people with common beliefs about the way society should be structured, the role that government should play, and the way government and citizens should relate to each other. Political parties provide a conduit for the ideas and opinions of citizens, and compete for the power and authority to implement their vision for the country as the legitimate elected government.

Through their choice of candidates and policies, political parties provide citizens with options for governance. They can strengthen national political institutions when they present these choices at elections and seek to mobilize citizens behind their vision and ideas. Political parties are a cornerstone of democracy and play a key role in the quality of government offered to citizens.

Political parties have functions in four primary areas:

Citizen Participation	Political parties create mechanisms and means for **individual citizens to become directly involved** in how a country is governed and run through their campaign structures during elections and outreach efforts outside of elections.
Policy Development	Political parties are **factories of ideas, policies and plans** for how the country should be run and how challenges facing the country should be addressed.
Electoral Competition	Political parties provide a means to **compete peacefully for political power** through elections, both by accepting the responsibility of governance when they have won an election and by respecting the choice of the voters when they have lost.
Governing Institutions	Political parties promote **healthy governing institutions** by the work they do to deliver for the people and run effective agencies and departments when in government; they also advance higher levels of accountability by the scrutiny they provide when in opposition.

To fulfill these functions, political parties must be strong, efficient and effective organizations, capable of delivering for the people in challenging circumstances, adapting to a constantly changing environment and managing both creativity and risk.

Political Parties and Citizen Participation

In democratic systems, political parties offer citizens opportunities to participate in political life and encourage active links between people and those who represent them.

There are a number of ways that political parties can engage citizens:

- Actively recruiting new party members
- Training existing party members in political skills
- Encouraging membership participation in election campaigns
- Encouraging membership participation in policy development
- Building strong party branches and internal structures
- Meeting and communicating regularly with members and voters
- Creating mechanisms to collect the opinion of voters and members, such as survey canvasses and community meetings

The value of these very simple activities should not be underestimated. Each of these helps political parties communicate more effectively with voters, and builds a stronger and healthier political system. The more citizens feel involved, engaged and represented, the more stable and effective a country's systems of governance will be.

Political Parties and Policy Development

At its heart, politics is meant to be a competition of ideas. Political parties carry the challenging and critical task of translating these ideas into viable policy options which can actually be implemented and evaluated.

Well-organized political parties institutionalize the capacity to develop and disseminate policy by creating a professional research staff, recruiting groups of experts in specific areas to inform policy options, and engaging their own members to harvest their ideas and opinions. There have also been occasions when political parties attempt to engage the entire electorate in their policy development processes.

The flow of policy development within a political party often looks something like this:

The party research staff		
Ad hoc groups of experts and party members	**Develop an effective policy agenda message** →	**Party supporters and activists feel that the party:** Cares about citizens' problems and share their concerns and hopes for the country Has a specific, immediate and feasible plan for improving the lives of citizens
Party members through consultation networks and/or public fora		

Not only do parties develop policy options and ideas, but they frequently also take on the function of educating and mobilizing the public on these issues. By effectively communicating their policy programs, political parties create an opportunity for the electorate to express their preferences on issues. Clear policy proposals also offer a mechanism through which parties can be held accountable based on their performance, i.e., whether they actually implemented the policy they promised to deliver.

Political Parties and Elections

In democratic elections, political parties play a key role by competing the policies they have developed, providing sound candidate choices, engaging in a healthy public debate, creating opportunities for individual citizens to get involved and, critically, abiding by the outcome of these contests. Moreover, they play a role in leading debate on the electoral system, setting the rules for competition and ensuring the integrity of the voting process. In these multi-faceted ways, political parties help to ensure that elections are true expressions of the will of the people.
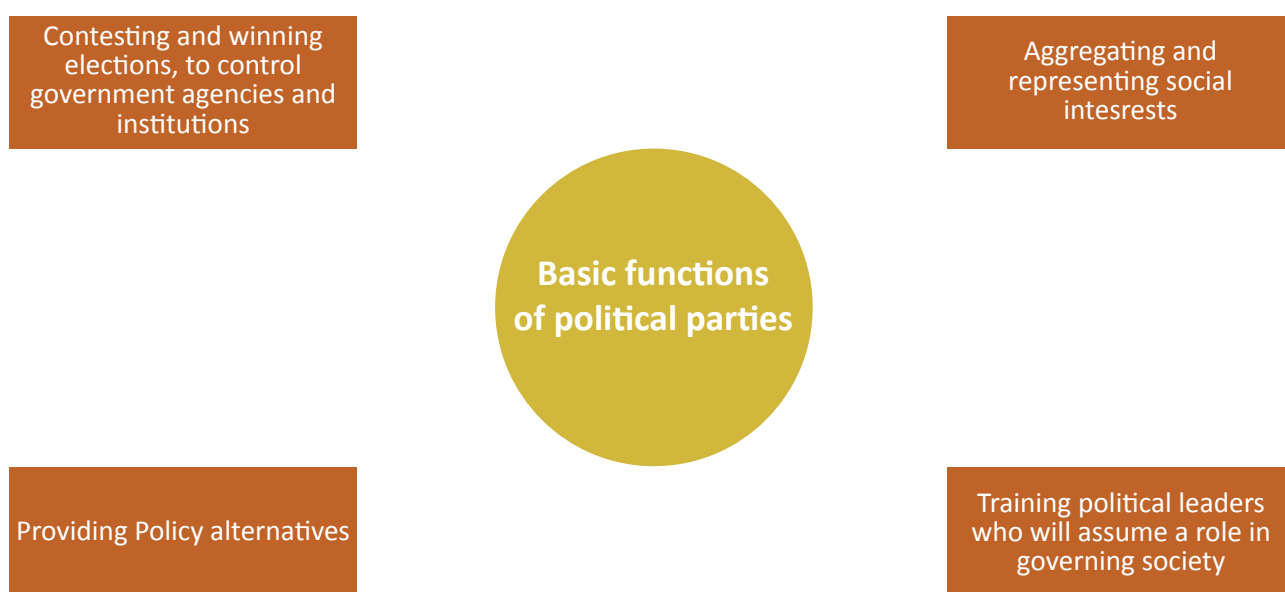
Political Parties and Governing

If an election has been won, a political party (or parties) must take on the exciting and extremely challenging task of governing. This means running the affairs of the country, further developing policy for implementation, overseeing the conduct and performance of government departments and agencies, taking responsibility for how money is spent, and delivering on promises made during the electoral campaign.

Being in government is an extraordinary time for a political party, and how well these parties are developed as organizations and institutions will impact their readiness to take on the responsibility of running a country effectively.

However, it is not just the victorious parties that play a key role after an election. The parties that did not enter government now become the opposition which, when well-organized, makes a critical contribution to the accountability of the institutions:

- Opposition parties have both a direct interest and a responsibility to monitor the actions and check the power of ruling parties, including putting forward viable policy alternatives that challenge those put forward by the government and provide citizens with both a contrast and a choice.
- At times, rather than countering the government, the opposition may work constructively with it to find compromises and better solutions to pressing problems.

Another way of interpreting the functions of political parties is illustrated below:

Contesting and winning elections, to control government agencies and institutions		Aggregating and representing social intesrests
	Basic functions of political parties	
Providing Policy alternatives		Training political leaders who will assume a role in governing society

Civil Society

Civil society refers to all groups outside government such as community groups, trade and labor unions, non-governmental organizations, issue-based groups, charitable organizations, faith-based organizations, and professional associations. Civil society expresses the interests of social groups and raises awareness of key issues in order to influence policy and decision-making. In recent decades, civil society organizations (CSOs) have been successful in shaping global policy through advocacy campaigns and mobilization of people and resources.

The increasing global trend toward democratization has opened up the political space for CSOs to play a more active role in influencing policy. Additionally, because they are frontline organizations with first-hand experience of the impact of a policy or a problem on the ground, CSOs often have information that government or political party experts do not. In this way, CSOs provide critical evidence and knowledge to the development of policy and legislation, which means that these are more likely to be effective when implemented.

According to a World Bank report (2002), "CSOs have become significant players in global development, are increasingly influencing the shape of global and national public policy [...] The growing focus among policy makers and citizens on the need for good governance and greater transparency has also opened doors for CSOs as players in the development business. Parliamentarians, media and other opinion leaders increasingly rely on CSOs for information and policy advice."

If civil society organizations are taking on a more active role in influencing politics, what makes them different from political parties? Some of the key distinctions are outlined below:

- Civil society organizations may choose whether or not they engage with the political process. Some CSOs choose not to get involved; others actively try to influence the political and public agenda. Regardless, CSOs should not be excluded from politics.
- Civil society organizations are more likely to focus on a smaller number of specific issue areas. Political parties are obliged to deal with all issues that have an impact on society.
- Political parties aspire to participate in government unlike CSOs, whose purpose is to see their agenda fulfilled by political parties in government.
- Civil society organizations can be both non-partisan and multi-partisan. When CSOs are independent, they are able to discuss and negotiate with all political parties for support for their agenda, as well as to criticize parties in the context of their programs, promises (fulfilled or unfulfilled) and actions.

The Media

For government to be accountable, the people must be aware of what is happening in the country. This is referred to as transparency in government. The media plays a big role in providing people with information on governmental performance, what decisions are being made that affect them, how they are being made, by whom, and why. No democracy can thrive unless citizens have the information they need to make

free and informed choices. When it is fulfilling this role, the media is often referred to as the fourth branch of government.

The media – newspapers, television, radio, billboards, Internet, social media platforms, etc. – play a critical role in providing information and a space for political dialogue in a democratic state. While media takes many different forms and has a range of audiences, there are some clear roles these outlets can play to support democratic development.

- A forum for discussion of important social, economic and political questions facing a society;
- A source of information on which citizens can base the decisions they make about these questions and issues;
- A mediator between citizens and their elected representatives which provides both with platforms to express concerns, actions and positions on issues of common concern; and,
- A tool to create awareness among a diverse and geographically dispersed society.

As the paragraphs above illustrate, the degree to which media outlets are wholly independent – i.e., not controlled or used as a mechanism for political or individual agendas – can impact the quality of the political engagement in a country. The emergence of more autonomous channels, such as video upload sites on the internet, individual blogs, and social media forums, has created important mechanisms to challenge biased media where it exists. But balancing private agendas with the vital information that citizens need to make informed choices remains an important task in many democracies.

Activity 2: Discussion on Democratic Actors

1. From the section on political parties above, review the four main functions of a political party. Think about the political parties in your own country. To what extent are they able to fulfill these functions? Think about your own political party. To what extent is it able to fulfill these functions?

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_____
_____
_____
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2. In many transitional democracies, there is already a healthy and vibrant civil society. In others, civil society is in its nascent stages, still emerging and developing. What is the situation of civil society in your country? To what extent does your political party regularly engage with civil society organizations?

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3. The professionalism and independence of the media can be key factors in developing an informed electorate. How do you rate the media in your country? Do you feel the media is playing a positive or negative role in the political development of your country?

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4. Which do you feel currently has more influence in your country: traditional media outlets such as television and newspapers, or newer platforms such as online blogs, social media forums, and video upload sites? Why?

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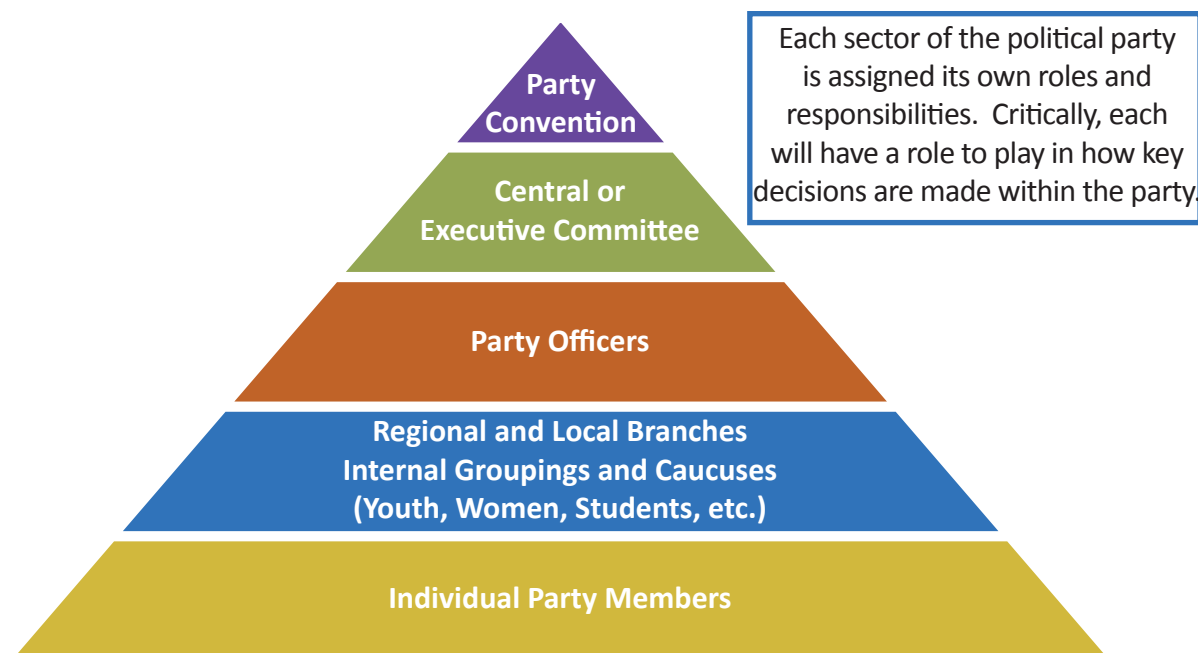# Best Practices for Political Parties in a Democracy

As the discussion points in this module illustrate, the expectations for what political parties will deliver to democratic societies are pretty high. Parties are expected to organize ideas, mobilize citizens, govern effectively, raise their own resources, communicate consistently, compete in elections, solve copious societal problems and, while doing all this, consistently behave in a manner which is accountable, transparent, ethical and legal. This is a substantial list of demands for any organization.

The manner in which a political party organizes itself has a direct impact on its ability to deliver in all of these areas. The political parties which experience the most consistent level of electoral success and highest degree of public approval are those that are structured in an open manner which invites participation, and which can embrace self-reflection, constructive criticism and change.

High-functioning political parties are characterized by:

- Clearly defined roles and responsibilities, rights and powers among all levels of the party;
- Clear and transparent decision-making processes and procedures inside the party; and,
- Regular and accessible communications, both within the party and with external audiences.

A common political party structure looks something like this:

Each sector of the political party is assigned its own roles and responsibilities. Critically, each will have a role to play in how key decisions are made within the party.

Party Convention

Central or Executive Committee

Party Officers

Regional and Local Branches
Internal Groupings and Caucuses
(Youth, Women, Students, etc.)

Individual Party Members

Because the internal structures of a political party affect its external behaviors, how each of these levels functions will have an impact on how successful the party can be. The organizational structures in which political leaders function impact their ability to be effective, to be creative, to be consultative and to take calculated risks.

To play a critical role in a democracy, and especially in transitional democracies, political parties must be democratic themselves. If parties do not practice and honor democratic values in their internal affairs, they are less likely to do so when they are contesting elections and governing.

Internal democracy in a political party is characterized by transparent, accountable and inclusive rules, organizational structures and processes. When applied in practice, these abstract ideals bring very real benefits to parties on the ground. Parties structured around these principles typically attract a broader base of talent in staff and volunteers and are positioned to run more effective and dynamic campaigns.

A party's commitment to democratic principles should be reflected in its written constitution, day-to-day interactions with members, and among the party's leadership and party members. Some examples of such democratic principles in action include:

- Abiding by agreed upon written rules of procedure
- Holding leaders accountable to members, for example, by creating finite terms of office and allowing members to select leaders
- Creating regular opportunities, such as membership forums and policy consultations, for members to express their views, and to do so openly and freely
- Encouraging the participation of all members
- Seeking to be fully representative of society by actively recruiting and promoting young people, women, and other less-represented groups
- Being tolerant of different political ideas and opinions among party members

How would you rate the current level of democratic practice among political parties in your country? (0% means completely undemocratic; 100% means democratic in all functions)
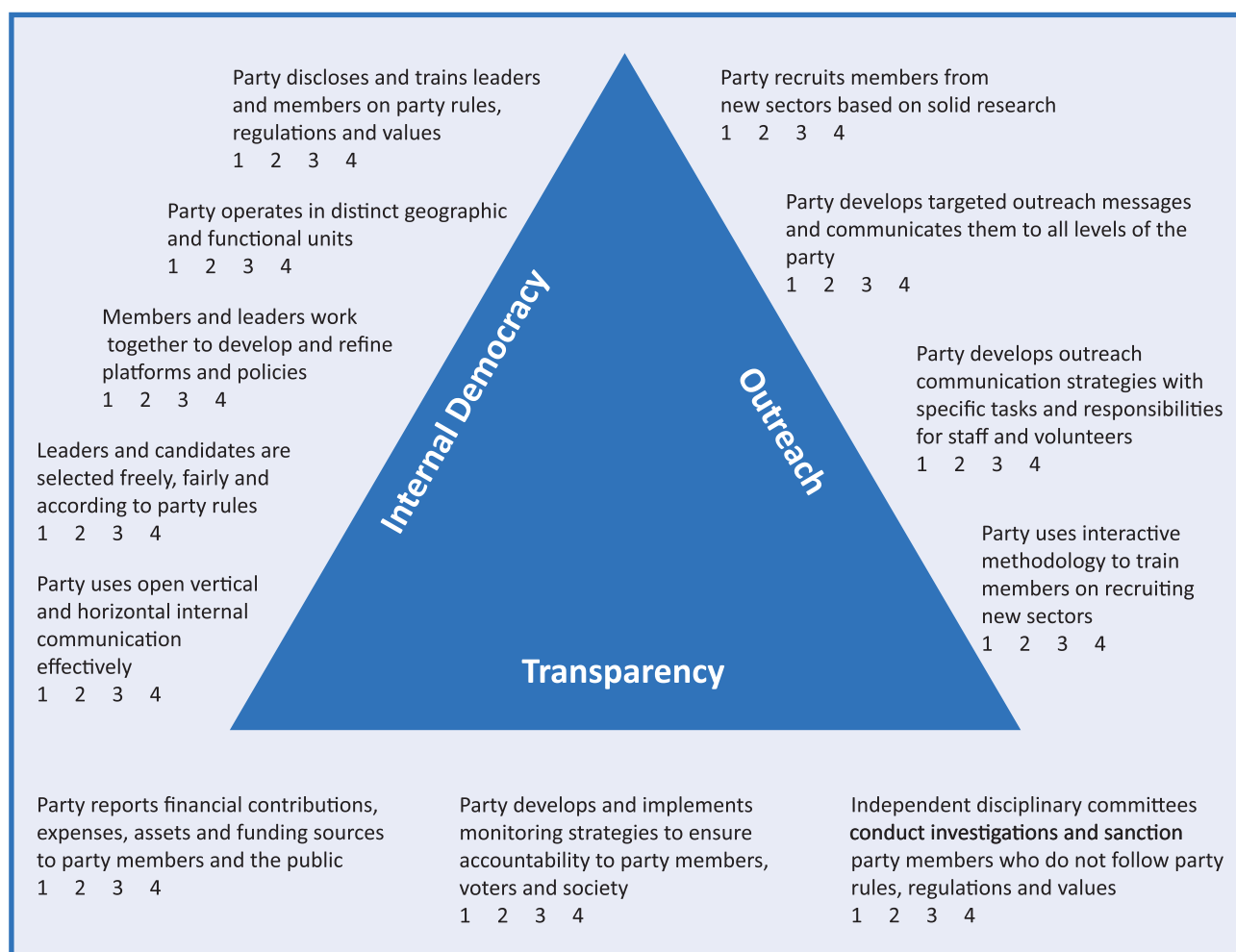
| 0% | 25% | 50% | 75% | 100% |
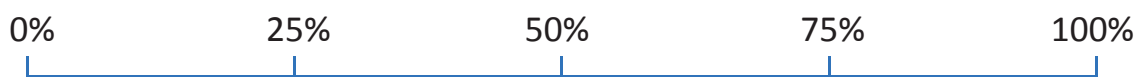
How would you rate the current level of democratic practice among your own political party? (0% means completely undemocratic; 100% means democratic in all functions)

| 0% | 25% | 50% | 75% | 100% |

Activity 3: Triangle of Political Party Best Practices

1. Below is the Triangle of Political Party Best Practices,[4] which is a framework to help you examine how your party functions in three key areas: internal democracy, outreach and transparency. These themes are extracted from extensive observations of the characteristics that contribute to effective political parties. They are areas that provide foundations for political parties to operate sustainably over the long-term, while still maintaining the ability to achieve short-term political gains, primarily winning elections.

Party discloses and trains leaders and members on party rules, regulations and values
1   2   3   4

Party operates in distinct geographic and functional units
1   2   3   4

Members and leaders work together to develop and refine platforms and policies
1   2   3   4

Leaders and candidates are selected freely, fairly and according to party rules
1   2   3   4

Party uses open vertical and horizontal internal communication effectively
1   2   3   4

Internal Democracy

Party recruits members from new sectors based on solid research
1   2   3   4

Party develops targeted outreach messages and communicates them to all levels of the party
1   2   3   4

Party develops outreach communication strategies with specific tasks and responsibilities for staff and volunteers
1   2   3   4

Outreach

Party uses interactive methodology to train members on recruiting new sectors
1   2   3   4

Transparency

Party reports financial contributions, expenses, assets and funding sources to party members and the public
1   2   3   4

Party develops and implements monitoring strategies to ensure accountability to party members, voters and society
1   2   3   4

Independent disciplinary committees **conduct investigations and sanction** party members who do not follow party rules, regulations and values
1   2   3   4

Please rate your political party in each of the practices outlined in the three legs of the triangle.

1. The party does not do this
2. The party does this sometimes
3. The party does this regularly and systematically
4. The party does this regularly, systematically and with consistent improvemen

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4   National Democratic Institute (2003), *Best Practices of Effective Political Parties.*

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2.   How did you rate your party in Internal Democracy? _____

3.   How did you rate your party in Transparency? _____

4.   How did you rate your party in Outreach? _____

5.   In which areas do you believe your party has demonstrated relatively good practice?
_____
_____

6.   In which areas do you think there is room for improvement?
_____
_____

7.   Were you surprised by any of your findings? If so, in what way?
_____
_____

Women's Participation

Creating gender balance in decision-making is a key development issue for many countries, including both long-established and newer democracies, and even in non-democratic systems. Gender balance refers to the degree to which both women and men are represented in different sectors, particularly in senior positions where power and authority are exercised and where decisions are made which impact society. Because in most cultures men vastly outnumber women in these posts, achieving gender balance focuses on actively promoting women's participation.

In politics, women's participation is more than a matter of fairness or equality; gender balance in decision-making has a direct impact on a country's stability and its ability to develop. When women share decision-making power with men at meaningful levels, countries experience a higher standard of living.[5] Positive developments can be seen in key areas, particularly education, health and infrastructure – all of which fuel economic development.

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5   The tendency of women policy-makers to prioritize education, health and infrastructure in particular leads to better outcomes for citizens and a higher quality of life. This has been documented in a number of studies. See: Chen, Li-Ju (2008) "Female Policymaker and Educational Expenditure: Cross- Country Evidence." Research Papers in Economics 2008: 1 Stockholm University, department of Economics, revised, Feb 27, 2008, http://ideas.repec.org/p/hhs/ sunrpe/2008_0001.html; and, UNICEF (2007) "Women and Children: The Double Dividend of Gender Equality," http:// www.unicef.org/sowc07/report/report.php. See also the background papers for the UNICEF report, including Beaman, L. et al. (2007) "Women Politicians, Gender Bias, and Policy-making in Rural India;" and Schwindt-Bayer, L. (2006) "Female legislators and the promotion of women, children, and family policies in Latin America," http://www.unicef. org/sowc07/docs/schwindt_bayer.pdf.

Women are force multipliers when it comes to economic growth. Programming and services that deliver better outcomes for women, e.g., higher levels of education and literacy or lower levels of poverty, also increase the well-being of their family members, in part because women reinvest 90 percent of their wealth in their families and communities.[6]

Women's participation also results in tangible gains for democratic governance and higher levels of satisfaction among the electorate regarding how the government is performing. When there is greater gender balance in government, voters experience:

• Greater responsiveness to citizen needs;
• Increased cooperation across party and ethnic lines; and,
• In conflict situations, more sustainable peace.[7]

Women are more likely to work across party lines and strive for consensus, even in partisan and polarized environments. Peace agreements and post-conflict reconstruction have a better chance of long-term success when women are involved.[8]

There is also substantial evidence that gender-balanced decision-making bodies, including boards of governors, executive committees and judicial bodies, function better. Boards with better gender balance pay more attention to auditing their work and to controlling risk, which suggests that they may be better able to minimize corruption and financial mismanagement.[9]

Political parties that take women's participation seriously stand to gain on a number of fronts. Most significantly, women voters outnumber men voters in most countries simply because women tend to live longer than men. As such, women voters have the potential to deliver the margin of victory in many elections for parties that take their issues seriously.

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6   By contrast, research suggests that men reinvest 30-40% of their wealth in their families and communities. See Half the Sky Movement, www.halftheskymovement.org

7   Strickland, R. and N. Duvvury (2003), "Gender Equity and Peacebuilding: From Rhetoric to Reality: Finding the Way." International Center for Research on Women, http://www.icrw.org/docs/gender_peace_report_0303.pdf; Powley, E. (2003) "Strengthening Governance: The Role of Women in Rwanda's Transition," Women Waging Peace and The Policy Institute, Hunt Alternatives Fund, http://www.huntalternatives.org/download/10_strengthening_governance_ the_role_of_women_in_rwanda_s_transition.pdf; International Crisis Group (2006), "Beyond Victimhood: Women's Peacebuilding in Sudan, Congo and Uganda" in *Crisis Group Africa Report N°112*; Women for Women International (2007), "Stronger Women, Stronger Nations 2007 Kosovo Report," http://www.womenforwomen.org/news-women- for-women/files/8254_Kosovo_Report_Spreads.FINAL_000.pdf.

8   Ibid.

9   There is substantial evidence on this point, primarily from the private sector. See coverage of the Association of British Insurer's report on effective boards, http://www.ivis.co.uk/PDF/ABI_1684_v6_CS4.pdf and the European Union report (2012), *Women in Economic Decision Making in the EU*, pg. 7, http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/ women-on-boards_en.pdf

To achieve these gains, political parties must look for women's participation to be both quantitative (in sufficient numbers around 50 percent) and qualitative (women must be given genuine power and authority, not just be there to fill a quota or make the party look like it's sympathetic to issues affecting women).

In most countries there are no legal barriers to women standing for election. Women's under-representation is a result of other obstacles such as candidate selection processes and the dominant political environment, which is less likely to value their contribution or accommodate their needs. Women are less likely to be selected as candidates or to have access to the resources necessary to run a competitive campaign.

For most political parties, genuinely committing to women's participation requires a fair amount of self-reflection, internal review and significant change.

Activity 4: Internal Audit on Women's Participation

1. Think about your own political party. How many women are in the party's senior leadership? Do they play a significant role in decision-making? Do they have the same level of power and authority as their male peers?

   _____
   _____

2. What is your party's candidate selection process? Do you consider it gender blind? Are specific mechanisms used to recruit women as candidates? Are women given viable positions on party lists or selected in constituencies where the party has a chance of winning?

   _____
   _____

3. How many elected women parliamentarians do you have, and what percentage of your party's MPs are women? How many of them hold senior posts within the party's parliamentary caucus or the legislature itself?

   _____
   _____

4. How many women elected officials does the party have at the regional or local level, and what percentage of the party's elected officials are women?

   _____
   _____

5. Does your party have recruitment and advancement mechanisms for women, such as training programs or outreach campaigns focused on bringing women into the party?

_____

_____

6. Does your party have a mechanism for policy development focused specifically on issues affecting women?

_____

_____

7. Does your party have a women's wing? If so, does it have its own budget? Does it have the authority and autonomy to make its own decisions?

_____

_____

8. The six most common barriers to women's participation are listed below. Review them and consider whether your political party has any specific mechanisms or programs to address these barriers.

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Childcare/Caring Responsibilities – Women are much more likely to be the primary caregivers of children and to carry most of the household responsibilities. This may mean that they simply don't have time for politics. When women are able to enter politics and take on those additional duties, their workload at home often stays the same, creating overwhelming demands on their time.

Cash – The cost of a viable campaign can be prohibitive for many women. Worldwide, women's financial earnings do not match those of men. In situations where women are also expected to be the primary caregivers, women candidates may have the additional cost of childcare or household support, making time away from families to campaign even more expensive or unaffordable.

Confidence – Women are less likely to perceive themselves as qualified for political office, even though they may have the same abilities as male peers, and are also less likely to receive encouragement to pursue positions of political leadership.

Culture – Cultural barriers to women's political participation exist both in society and within political parties. There may be societal expectations for women that make it difficult for them to be perceived as political leaders. Additionally, the culture within political parties and the accepted norms of behavior can make them uncomfortable places for women. Political meetings may be held in locations where women feel – or are – excluded, or they may be held at times that are unsuitable for those with caring responsibilities, or unsafe times for women to travel.

Class – Social and economic class can be a barrier to women's political participation. There is often an expectation that politicians will have a degree of formal education and social status; less value can be placed on life experience and practical skills. These expectations can impede the ascent of women, particularly those with fewer official educational qualifications, those from a poorer or economically deprived background, and those from rural areas.

Candidate Selection Processes – Candidate selection processes have the single greatest impact on a woman's ability to stand for office and be elected. Confidence and childcare become irrelevant for campaigning and holding office if a woman cannot make it through a candidate selection process with any chance of being elected.

Youth Participation

Today's generation of young people is the largest in history. By 2015, nearly half the world's population – more than three billion people – will be under the age of 25.[10] Young people are the fastest growing segment of the population in countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), with children and young people under the age of 25 comprising about 60 percent of the current population. The median age of the total population in the region is 22 years, compared with the global average of 28.[11]

These numbers are a serious call to action for political parties worldwide, particularly in the MENA region:

- Political parties must view young people as an asset who can make significant contributions to the growth, development and stability of their countries. However, they require the appropriate support and investment to achieve their potential.
- The policy needs of children and young people must be taken seriously by political parties and lawmakers. For example, it is projected that the MENA region will require more than 51 million new jobs by 2020 to employ these young people, whose current rate of unemployment is more than twice that of the rest of the adult population.[12] This will be a particular challenge as more than 100 million of these young people currently do not attend school.
- This large population of young people must be perceived as representing new ideas, new energy and new opportunities, and not as a problem to be contained or controlled.

Political parties that seize the opportunity offered by this large population of young people stand to gain substantially in the coming years, in terms of electoral support and increased membership. Acting on the issues which affect young people is also likely to lead to more success in governing.

Maximizing the potential of young people starts with recruiting them as political party members. From there, the opportunities that parties offer to young people will have a direct impact on whether or not they become active members, or chose to stay as members. The more a party implements an internal merit-based system for promotion within the party – rather than expecting young people to quietly wait their turn for leadership opportunities behind older members who have been their longer, regardless of ability – the more likely it is that the party will retain young people as members and supporters, and benefit from their energies and talents.

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10   UK Department for International Development (2010), Youth Participation in Development, pg. 7, see http://www.ygproject.org/
11   George Mason University, Children and Youth in History website, http://chnm.gmu.edu/cyh/primary-sources/424
12   Ibid.

Activity 5: Opportunities for Young People

1. Consider the situation of young people in your country. What do you think political parties, and especially your own party, should be doing to get young people more actively involved? Write down your ideas below.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
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_____

2. Check the list you have made with some of the options listed here. Political parties can help young people become more actively involved in politics by:

   - Developing an outreach message specifically for young people, based on surveys and research about what young people say is important to them
   - Initiating a membership recruitment campaign focused specifically on young people
   - Building the skills of younger members through training and educational opportunities
   - Creating opportunities for young people to learn and practice leadership skills
   - Creating a merit-based system of promotion and advancement within the party, so that young people are not simply expected to "wait their turn in line"
   - Creating policy mechanisms which survey the needs of children and young people and develop specific program options for addressing these
   - Building wings or networks within the party for young people to support one another and develop their own ideas and proposals
   - Recruiting and preparing young people as candidates, campaign managers, heads of party branches and spokespeople

Activity 6: Internal Audit on Youth Participation

Ask yourself the following questions about your party's current approach to working with young people.

1. Does your party have a youth wing and/or a student wing? If so, does it have its own budget? Does it have the authority and autonomy to make its own decisions? Is it represented in the executive of the party?

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2. How does your party define youth? What is the cut off age to belong to the youth wing? Is it applied to the leadership of the youth wing? Does this genuinely represent a youthful age, or are people well beyond their youth involved?

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_____

3. What are some of the priorities for youth in your party?

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4. What are the barriers or obstacles to youth participation in your party?

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Elections in a Democracy

An election is a decision made by voting. In political elections, the eligible population of voters makes important decisions about what should happen in their country. All of the political parties, political leaders, and authority figures in the country are expected to respect those decisions.

In an election that is considered free and fair, there are no barriers to people expressing their political opinions at the ballot box. Voters can choose whichever candidates or political parties they trust most to speak on their behalf and to deliver for the country, without fear of reprisal or retribution.

The foundation for democratic elections is based in international standards. Article 21 of the Declaration of Human Rights states:[13]

1. Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.
2. Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country.
3. The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will (of the people) shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections, which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

For an election to be democratic, represent the true wishes of the people, and be viewed as legitimate, certain conditions must be met which include:

- A real choice of and competition among political parties and candidates;
- Freedom for parties and candidates to campaign in the election and communicate their ideas and platforms;
- The existence of rules that govern the election, which are known and respected by all participants and available to everyone;
- The presence of an individual or institution that administers the rules, supervised by an independent judicial body to ensure that complaints are handled fairly;
- Strong legal procedures to protect against corruption or violence that may occur when people register to vote, attend a political meeting, or cast their vote; and,
- Efforts to educate citizens on why it is important for them to vote, as well as to know the choice of candidates and how to vote.

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13   http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html

Therefore, the guiding principles of elections are the following:

The Guiding Principles of Elections	
Representation	When citizens cast their vote for a candidate, they are giving that person the right to represent their interests in government. This right is not given without responsibilities; it is given under the assumption that the individual in government will act responsibly and will to the best of his/her abilities truly represent the constituent's interest.
Transparency	It is important that the mechanisms of the electoral system be as transparent as possible and known to both voters and political parties and candidates well in advance in order to avoid confusion and distrust in the results they produce at elections.
Inclusiveness	The electoral system will have a greater chance of being accepted as fair and legitimate if it is considered to be inclusive of all groups in society. This means not only that the electoral law allows as many citizens as possible to vote (this includes universal suffrage, making sure that the system is easily understandable, and assuring access for all to the polling station), but also that the mechanisms of the electoral system do not overtly discriminate against any one group in society, minority or otherwise.

To ensure that these principles are met, the state has an obligation to pass, implement and enforce legislation which guarantees a number of conditions. These include that:

- Each and every citizen of legal age has the right to participate as a voter and as a candidate no matter what his or her class, caste, tribe, gender, or religion;
- Elections take place at regular intervals, so that people can review or change their choice of governing party;
- The voting procedure gives everyone the right to a vote, maintains the secrecy of the ballot and ensures all cast ballots are accurately counted; and,
- An election management body, which is recognized as neutral and free of political influence, controls the operation of elections. This may be a stand-alone commission or part of a government agency as long as it functions independently and without prejudice. Members of the body should be trustworthy members of the community. Anyone should be able to complain to the body about election irregularities. The body should act quickly and fairly and everyone should respect its decisions.

Once the conditions and standards for democratic elections are met, there is still the important matter of who actually competes in the election! Political parties and candidates, and the ideas and proposals they bring to the debate, play a crucial role in the vitality of a democratic system. They're frequently organized in the following manner:

Elements of an Election	
Competitors	The types of competitors in an election will depend on the electoral system, but include either political parties, individual candidates, or independent candidates, or a combination of these.
	Political Parties – Political parties are groupings of individuals who share similar ideas on how the country should be run. Whether voters cast votes for a political party or individual candidates depends on the system of election.
	Candidates – Candidates are those people who stand for election either as individuals or on a party list, depending on the system of election.
	Independent Candidates – Independent candidates are those individuals who stand for election without the backing of a political party.
Issues and Ideas	The issues and ideas surrounding an election are addressed in the proposals, platforms or manifestos offered to the electorate by the political parties and candidates.
Registration and Voting Processes	It is vital that all eligible voters know how to register to vote in advance of an election, and how to cast their ballot on election day.
Electoral Rules	The rules governing an election can address a number of areas, including: the length of the official campaign; how the election will be administered and monitored, and who will take on these tasks; how votes will be counted; how much money parties can spend on their campaigns; the role of the media; the role of the police and security forces; and, rules on advertising and media coverage.
Voters	Voters are the citizens who select the officials who will represent them. Voters must meet the legal requirements for voting in terms of age, residency or citizenship, and be registered to vote in time for the election.