



NATIONAL  
DEMOCRATIC  
INSTITUTE

## Request for Proposals

---

# Ensuring the Voice and Agency of Women Through Polling

**Issued:** September 8, 2021  
**Responses Due:** October 15, 2021

Vendors may email questions and responses to the following contact:

Bridget Rittman-Tune  
Program Associate  
Gender, Women and Democracy  
[brittmantune@ndi.org](mailto:brittmantune@ndi.org)

National Democratic Institute  
455 Massachusetts Ave, NW, 8th Floor  
Washington, DC 20001

## **Request for Proposals (RFP)**

The purpose of this request for proposals (RFP) is to identify vendors who can work with the National Democratic Institute's Gender, Women and Democracy team on a program to test the feasibility of mitigating the exclusion and regression from the political sphere that globally women and girls routinely experience as a result of political, social and/or economic shocks through a program on developing and testing polling tools. There will be three countries in total where the polling will take place and those countries are tentatively Sudan, Lebanon, and Papua New Guinea. The capacity to work in one, two or all three of these countries will be given consideration, but a bid does not need to include all three to be competitive. Capacity to perform polling in Sudan is a requirement, but additional countries the polling firm has the ability and experience to work in outside of Lebanon and Papua New Guinea will also be considered. The core responsibilities of the vendor will be to test methodologies, conduct surveys in the three countries, and to review and provide feedback on initial polling findings and data analysis that convey the needs and priorities of women in cities in moments of response and recovery to shocks.

These tools are intended to allow women and girls to retain their voice and agency and to amplify their voices directly to local governance and political stakeholders. They may choose to do this through connecting to organizations focused on women's rights or through individual officeholders (whether men or women) or political institutions such as political parties. The outcomes of this polling research will fill gender gaps in data on recovery from shocks, and will enable more evidence-based policymaking by local, national, and international actors. In order to complete this program, NDI will require the services of an external research and polling firm that can conduct polling through digital and SMS communications, and in person, or some effective combination of all the above.

This RFP will be shared with a limited number of bidders and the contract will be awarded to one or more vendors that best meets the requirements listed in section four of this document.

### **I. About NDI**

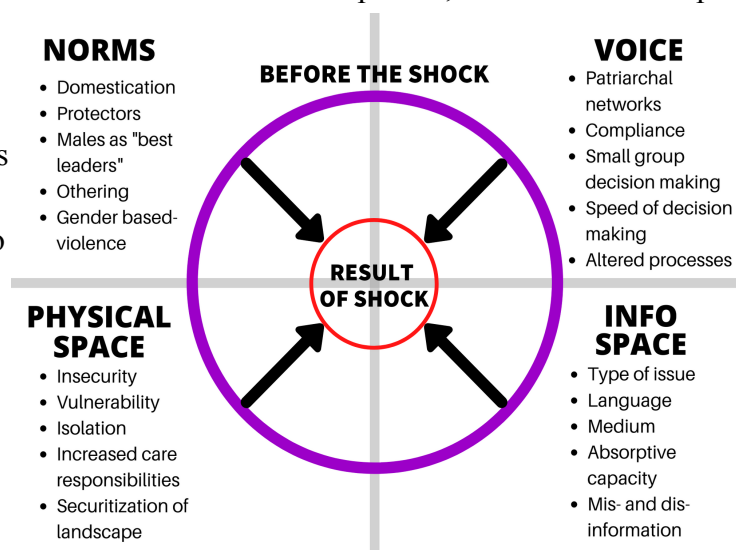
The National Democratic Institute (NDI) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, nongovernmental organization that has supported democratic institutions and practices in every region of the world for more than three decades. NDI receives grants and cooperative agreements to pursue its mission from U.S. Federal agencies, including the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Department of State (DOS), as well as grants and service contracts from private and international donors such as the United Nations Development Fund, the U.K. Department for International Development (DFID) and the World Bank, among others.

Since its founding in 1983, NDI and its local and international partners have worked to establish and strengthen political and civic organizations, safeguard elections and promote citizen participation, openness and accountability in government. NDI works on five continents with political parties, governments, parliaments and civic groups to establish and strengthen democratic institutions and practices. NDI's work focuses on creating resilient democratic systems with the capacity to manage diverse and complex social, economic and political demands effectively. Democratic resilience requires that systems and processes take account of all populations, including women. NDI is a leading organization in the field of advancing women's political participation around the world, empowering them to participate, compete and lead as equal and active partners in democratic change. Mobilizing its global networks and drawing on three decades of experience in 132 countries, NDI supports women's aspirations for gender equality, and for inclusive and responsive government. NDI's multinational approach reinforces the message that while there is no single democratic model, certain core principles are shared by all democracies.

## II. Introduction

In this program, NDI seeks to test the feasibility of mitigating the exclusion and regression from the political sphere that women and girls routinely experience as a result of political, social and/or economic shocks - including COVID-19 - through developing and testing polling tools.

Research shows that following political, social, and economic shocks - including pandemics, conflicts, and natural disasters - the political space for all actors shrinks. At a time when their perspectives are most needed to ensure effective and sustainable responses, women's leadership in the public decision-making is likely to fall significantly. For women, this shrinking space is particularly problematic not only in terms of the loss of their voice and agency in political and decision-making processes, but also in terms of physical restrictions and information gaps, as reflected in the graphic above. There is also a tendency - unchallenged because of the rising exclusion - to revert to less progressive gender norms for both political and socio-cultural reasons. As women's voices, perspectives, and solutions are most needed to prevent the outward ripple-effects of the shock causing further societal schism and insecurity, women generally begin to retreat from the public space. This program utilizes NDI's Shocks, Democracy, and Gender framework to guide



its approach to ensuring women and girls' voice and agency is amplified directly to local governance and political stakeholders.

Gender data gaps can affect the way policy is developed, how program effectiveness is monitored, and can even impede progress towards gender equality. According to the Brookings Institution, "if the male perspective is assumed to be the standard and the female perspective is the 'other', the institutions that rest on that assumption, the decision-making processes leaders employ, and the policy choices that result, suffer. This limits government effectiveness." To address these data gaps and mitigate the exclusion and regression from the political sphere that women face as a result of shocks, this program would seek to hear directly from women and would provide support to integrate their responses into platforms for policy and action by local, national, and international actors, as well as to inform NDI's programmatic responses. In the context of COVID-19, international and multilateral institutions have highlighted persistent gender gaps in data and in the participation of women and girls in both the public health and recovery decision-making which can have serious consequences on the effectiveness of policy and governance. Therefore, the program's goal is to develop tools that ensure the voice and agency of women and girls are amplified and central to the policy and institutional landscape during recovery from shocks, specifically with respect to COVID-19. As indicated above, these polling tools will also be relevant to shoring up the voice and agency of women and girls in other shock situations, including conflict, political crisis, and natural or man-made disasters.

Rather than traditional public opinion polling, which often seeks a gender-balanced and regionally representative sample, NDI will use its action-learning methodology to collaboratively develop data gathering tools, including survey instruments and focus group guides, aimed at hearing directly from women and girls in geographically dispersed urban settings about their lived experiences of COVID-19, the shrinking political space, the government response, and local governance challenges. The action-learning methodology: (a) incorporates women's perspectives throughout program design and implementation; and, (b) tests tools and approaches in a number of country contexts to ensure global resonance and relevance. Women and girls will provide their views on opportunities for gender-transformative response and recovery, and the long-term priorities for economic recovery, bridging divides, and enhancing security with gender equality. The vendor will co-create the survey with NDI and women's rights organizations located in each urban center location.

NDI will focus the survey sample on selected urban centers to mitigate the risks and challenges of in-person delivery and data gathering provided by COVID-19. NDI will work with the vendor to identify the urban centers which will be the program sites based on the state of and need for women's political engagement other key criteria. These centers may be of specific national significance - for example, rapidly growing through migration or an important settlement for an ethnic minority or particularly vulnerable for violence or natural disaster - where women's voice

and agency can be a critical component for building resilience. NDI will also look for the presence of other key indicators of an environment that will enable positive policy outcomes for women and girls at the urban level, including: elected women's representatives; a governmental unit tasked with women's empowerment or gender equality; and an autonomous women's movement. The relative governance capability of local/urban political actors and institutions will also need to be taken into account.

The delivery mechanisms for the survey and data gathering will be informed by the results of context and technology assessments in the initial phase of the program.

Once the data has been completed and the data analyzed, NDI will connect with and support local women's rights civil society organizations (CSOs) in each case study country throughout the program to help inform and contextualize the research gaps, understand the likely challenges and opportunities for surveying women in each country, and to strengthen their own advocacy on policy making and gender-sensitive COVID recovery through connecting them with research findings. The same women's rights organizations in each country would be working alongside NDI in all phases of the program. Ultimately, these women's rights organizations will be co-owners of the survey results and data so that they can use the new data to drive evidence-based advocacy in the recovery from COVID-19 and other shocks.

### **III. RFP Scope of Work**

NDI will require the services of an external research and polling firm as a technical consultant that can conduct polling online, in person, or both. There will be three countries in total where the polling will take place. NDI has tentatively selected Sudan, Lebanon, and Papua New Guinea as the three country locations, and would want to understand from the technical partner whether they have the ability to work in these three countries, or in other countries through their own global network.

The technical consultant would co-create with NDI and women's rights organizations the survey tool to be utilized in three countries with a sample of women in urban centers, and will then conduct the survey and data gathering in these three countries either in person, online or some version of the two. Finally the technical consultant would deliver to NDI the high level findings from the survey in three countries, along with initial data analysis, and the raw coded data.

#### **Program Implementation**

1. Once the vendor(s) has been selected, NDI will work with it and NDI's in-country partner women's CSOs, to create a survey based on the specific state of the voice and agency of women and girls in the urban centres, and data gaps identified by women's rights organizations in the urban center. Survey topics may include:
  - their lived experiences of COVID-19 - care burdens, employment,

- education, violence;
  - the shrinking political space;
  - government and local governance responsiveness to the priorities of women and girls;
  - what women and girls understand of plans for COVID-19 response and recovery;
  - their medium- and long-term priorities for economic recovery and political engagement - e.g. jobs, accommodation, educational opportunities, safety and security, changes in the care economy, other legislative reforms.
  - All surveys will be translated into at least one local language and delivered to a range of women and girls in cities including from different socio-economic backgrounds.
2. The survey will first be piloted by the technical consultant in one of the three selected urban centers. In addition to the selection criteria reflected above, the urban center selected for piloting would depend on the electoral calendar, the findings of gendered technology assessment, other NDI programmatic activities in-country, and other criteria to be determined alongside the technical consultant.
  3. After the pilot is completed, the technical consultant will provide preliminary high-level survey results to NDI and partner women's CSOs in the urban centres, in order to assess the efficacy of the survey tool and make any necessary changes to the survey instrument. After the survey questions have been updated and finalized, the survey will be delivered by the technical consultant in the two remaining case study countries.
  4. Once the surveys have been conducted, the technical consultant will analyze the quantitative survey data and present the analysis, findings, and recommendations in a report to NDI. The technical consultant will also provide a companion assessment of the effectiveness, benefits and challenges of the methodology and research design to inform NDI's external publications on enhancing women's voice and agency in recovery from shocks through data and evidence-based policy making. The technical consultant will also be available for workshop sessions with local women's rights organizations in each of the three countries to discuss the country level findings.

### **Timeline**

The vendor will be expected to complete the work in a 6 month contract period from approximately October 2021 to April 2022.

### **IV. Criteria for Vendor Selection**

In its bid, the winning company should demonstrate:

- Experience in gender-informed research and quantitative data gathering methods;
- Commitment to building a strong partnership with NDI and with any in-country partners that are identified to support the program;

- Capacity to work in and with the identified case study countries and/or a list of countries and regions where the technical consultant has the capacity to work in and with, that they would suggest as potential country case studies;
- Working practices that are compatible with “Do No Harm” (DNH) principles in research and data collection on violence against women and show a strong accountability to the women's movement at local level;
- Technical expertise in remote, online and mobile/SMS delivery mechanisms for surveys/polling;
- A commitment to capacity transfer to NDI's local partners;
- A competitive budget for the RFP;
- Ability to work to an agreed timely timeframe for delivery.

## **V. Proposal Guidelines and Submission Process**

The deadline for when bidders must submit this request for proposal is by midnight EST on October 15, 2021. Late proposals will not be accepted. Please attach estimated costs associated with the scope of work described above.

Proposals should include the following information:

- Company history and core services
- Client list, particularly any international, political or non-profit organizations
- Detailed budget containing all costs, including staff time and projected communication and travel expenses. Proposals may be priced by day or by hour. Different rates may be given for different services and/or different team roles.
- A portfolio of past work
- If the execution of work to be performed by your company requires the hiring of subcontractors, you must clearly state this in your proposal. NDI will not refuse a proposal based upon the use of subcontractors, however, NDI retains the right to refuse the subcontractors selected by a vendor.

NDI places more weight on applications that can:

1. demonstrate previous experience in conducting gender-informed research and data gathering with women globally;
2. have capacity to work in the three countries listed and/or provide a list of recommended countries to work in;
3. ensure the integration of 'Do No Harm' principles, and generate analysis that is robust, inclusive, and gender-aware; and,
4. demonstrate a commitment to mutual accountability and collaboration with NDI and its local partners.

Bidders can submit questions before the final deadline for this request for proposals process. Please contact Bridget Rittman-Tune, [brittmantune@ndi.org](mailto:brittmantune@ndi.org).

Early submissions are welcome and appreciated. NDI will evaluate bids based on the vendor's experience, costs and ability to satisfy the proposed requirements. NDI may request meetings or

calls to discuss proposals and reserves the right to reject any and all bids. NDI also reserves the right to make smaller awards to more than one bidder and to consider bids for modification at any time before an award is made. NDI will not be liable for any costs associated with the preparation, transmittal or presentation of any materials submitted in response to this RFP, but reserves the right to request further information before making an award. Please note that selected vendor(s) would be expected to use NDI's standard contract template, a copy of which is available upon request.

Gender, Women and Democracy  
National Democratic Institute  
Washington DC, 20001  
September 2021