



Women and Local Executive Office



NATIONAL
DEMOCRATIC
INSTITUTE



kate spade

NEW YORK

The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, 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.

NDI is the leading organization working to advance women's political participation around the world. The Institute empowers women 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 inclusive and responsive government. The Institute works with political parties, parliaments and governments to ensure that women can participate in politics as citizens, candidates and decision makers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

NDI conducted this research under the Paths to Power project through funding from the Kate Spade Foundation, which is the philanthropic arm of Kate Spade & Company, formerly Liz Claiborne, Inc. The views expressed in this report are the authors' and not those of the Foundation.

NDI extends its thanks to the many staff and partners who contributed to the development of this report, including women elected officials and candidates who participated in surveys and focus groups, and NDI field and DC-based staff.

This publication is the product of the Gender, Women and Democracy program at the National Democratic Institute, under the direction of Sandra Pepera. Other Gender, Women and Democracy staff involved with the research and publication of this report include Caroline Hubbard, Claire DeSoi and former staff member Susan Kemp.

March, 2015

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	i
Introduction	1
Characteristics of Women Mayors	2
Challenges for Women Mayors	2
<i>The Individual's Context</i>	2
<i>The Institutional Context</i>	3
<i>The Socio-Cultural Context</i>	3
NDI's Programming for Women Mayors	4
<i>Academy for Future Women Mayors: Mexico</i>	4
<i>Fostering Reconciliation Through Women Leaders: Côte d'Ivoire</i>	5
Program Guidance	7
Additional NDI Program Examples	9
What Does the Future Hold?	10
References	11





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

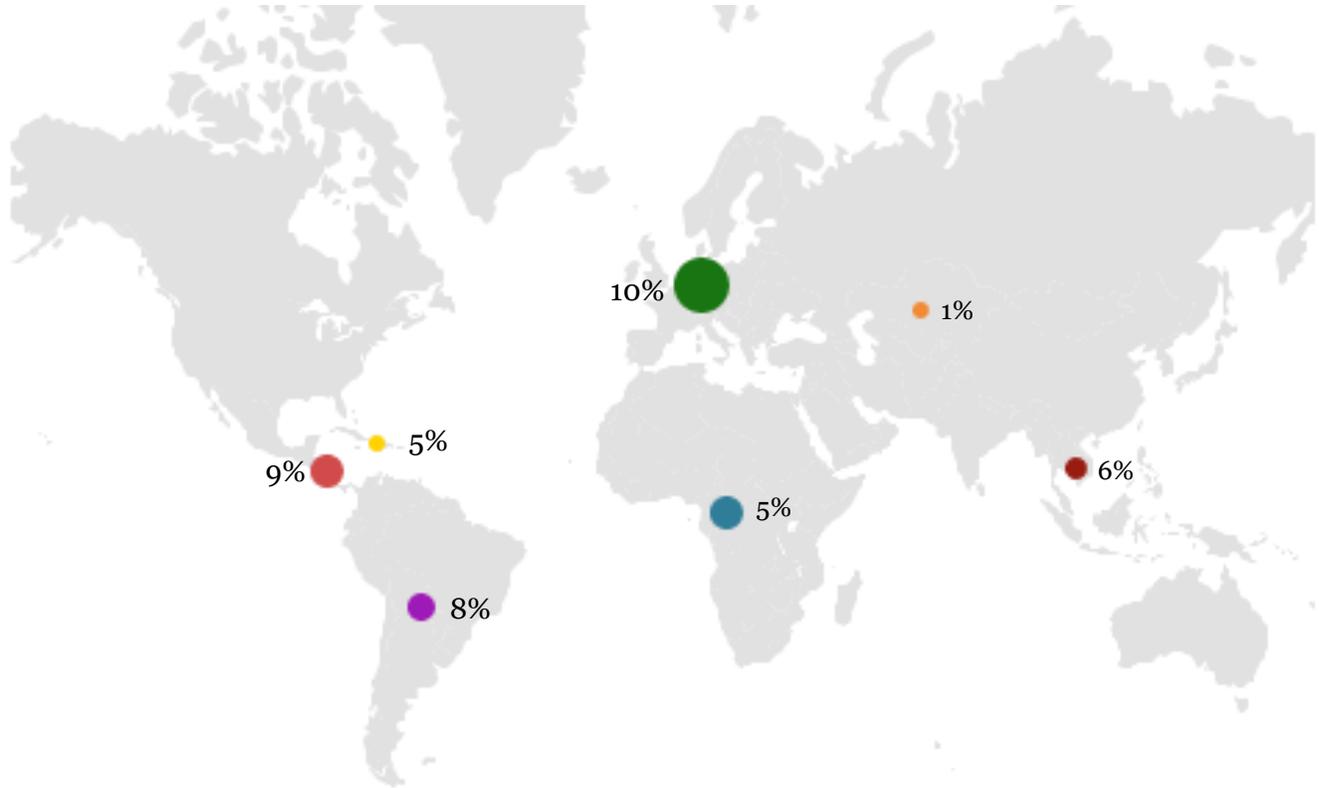
Throughout the world, women are consistently underrepresented in leadership positions at the local level, even in countries with high numbers of women in national office. This report explores the context for women in local executive offices, and the unique challenges and opportunities they face in their positions. In this research, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) evaluated initial programming targeting women mayors and mayoral candidates, and conducted interviews with current and former mayors. The report details the results of that investigation, identifying trends in the experiences of women in local executive offices, and capturing lessons to inform the design and implementation of future programming. Key recommendations include ensuring a strong contextual analysis at the forefront of any program design, addressing the local candidate nomination process, strengthening women’s effective communication with the media and their communities, and building strong mentoring and support networks.

Women and Local Executive Office

INTRODUCTION

Even in countries with relatively high numbers of women in national office, women generally do not have high levels of participation at the local level, and particularly not in mayoral positions. Though global data on the number of women mayors is largely unavailable and outdated,¹ there are some statistics that show local executive posts have been a particular preserve of male leadership across the globe. The World Organization of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) provides some of the few statistics available and lists the global average of women mayors at

less than 5 percent. Many countries including Morocco and Afghanistan have only one or two women serving in this position nationwide.² Besides Latvia (25 percent), Mauritius (40 percent), New Zealand (26 percent), and Serbia (26 percent), all of the 77 other countries or areas with available data had fewer than 20 percent women mayors.³ The 2003-2008 regional averages of women as mayors compiled by the United Nations from UCLG and national sources can be represented graphically as follows:⁴



Women leaders have taken on mayoral posts in a variety of contexts. In the last five years, countries as diverse as Egypt, Bosnia, Afghanistan and Macedonia have seen their first woman mayor, and influential cities such as Paris, Zurich and Sofia, Bulgaria, now have women mayors. Even so, only 10 of the world's 195 capital cities are headed by women.⁵

Through this research, NDI seeks to better understand the needs of and opportunities for women executives at the local level, as well as to capture lessons from promising programs in Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa to share these lessons more broadly.

Institute staff conducted research and interviews with NDI program participants, including current and former women mayors and mayoral candidates, to identify their perspectives on the qualities needed for a successful woman mayor, as well as the challenges women face in running for mayor and governing effectively as a local executive. This fact sheet outlines those areas before considering case studies from NDI programs in Mexico and Côte D'Ivoire, as well as broader strategies for programs seeking to increase the number of women mayors and to equip them to be effective.

CHARACTERISTICS OF WOMEN MAYORS

When asked what makes a woman leader successful, electoral officials, women's civic groups, and local women candidates or elected officials, point to the need for a strong support network of their female peers, as well as the necessity for broader networks of men and women in their community and within their party. To win elections, they said, candidates need to be close to their community. Women often have strong community ties, and are therefore often well-positioned for successful candidacies; however, they must learn to cultivate their existing relationships into an electoral support base. One individual noted that the effective use of social media plays a role in communication and outreach.

"Women are very insightful on how to run a city, ensure its improvement and cleanliness and take care of supporting women, children and families, through cultural centers, parks, and social projects."
– Janet Mikhael, first woman mayor of Ramallah, Palestine⁶

Some of those interviewed noted that women bring ethics

to the political process, and that they generally govern with honesty and hard work. Others noted that the characteristics needed for good governance are not different for a woman or man: a mayor should be charismatic, responsible, honest, a good communicator, sensible but able to diagnose municipal needs, communicate with citizens and build a good team. According to respondents, a mayor also needs to possess the skills to manage and administer in areas such as finance, budget, administration, human resources, management, planning, and policy development. Others argued that due to increased scrutiny, women have to perform at a higher level to prove themselves to the public and their political parties. Another important aspect for women is the ability to negotiate; without this, most women cannot obtain their party's nomination to run.

"We women face many challenges since we are just getting started. Though women are very capable and are making their way in politics, there are also many obstacles. This requires us to work twice as hard: in the first place, we have to train ourselves because the more we learn, the more doors will open. We also want other women to have the same opportunities and we can only achieve that by working together and understanding that together we can reach significant changes." – Adelmá Salas, president, Paraguayan Network of Women Municipal Leaders⁷

CHALLENGES FOR WOMEN MAYORS

The following outlines some of the specific challenges women face in becoming effective mayors. Situations vary in each country based on a range of issues such as the legal and electoral framework, the status of women's political participation, and other socio-cultural aspects. The specific situation impacts programming strategies and opportunities, yet there are a number of common challenges for women mayors that have been identified *across* countries in which NDI operates. These can be defined as occurring in three contexts: the individual, the institutional, and the socio-cultural or environment.

The Individual's Context

The barriers that women face in politics as individuals generally also apply to women seeking local executive office. These include lacking the confidence, capacity and connections to obtain a nomination and, if elected, to operate effectively.

Lack of *confidence* can often impact a woman’s initial engagement in politics, but it can also impact other areas such as her leadership development, and her ability to be assertive and negotiate. Once in office, confidence is an important aspect of any mayor’s ability to coordinate across municipal structures to move initiatives forward.

Given women’s historical marginalization in politics, *capacity* is also a key challenge. Many women need to acquire increased knowledge and skills, such as fundraising, messaging, communicating with the media, negotiation, consensus building, and an understanding of the public administration process, to be good mayors. Women may also need help recognizing how the skills they have acquired outside of politics can be put to use in their new roles.

Entrenched, male-dominated political structures at the local level often mean that women must build their *connections* to wage successful campaigns and become effective mayors. Strengthened networks can help women address barriers by building their support base, enhancing avenues for fundraising and access to material or other resources, and fostering support from other women.

The Institutional Context

Political parties continue to be an important institutional gateway to political participation, but they are often a roadblock for women seeking the post of mayor. While some parties are committed to gender equality, political parties generally remain largely male-dominated spaces and structures that marginalize women.

In countries where elections are based on a system of proportional representation, the position of mayor is often filled from the top of a party’s candidate list. It can be very challenging for women to negotiate in order to appear in that position on the list, particularly in municipalities or

“Being the first woman Mayor is indeed a great challenge. I have to prove not only to myself but also to the public, because if I am not perceived as a good leader, the general public would not be able to repose their faith in a woman who seeks political office. I have to work hard to demonstrate that a woman can work better and smarter.” – *Sylviana Murni, first woman mayor in Indonesia*⁸

districts where they can be competitive as candidates. Even where this is not the case, women face added barriers in local elections. While gender quotas have proven to be an effective mechanism in increasing the number of women in legislative office, they are generally only in effect or enforced at the national level, not local. As a result, parties are not obligated to include women among their chosen candidates for mayoral races. Unequal access to public funding to support women’s campaigns is another significant challenge. Once in office, mayors often face such institutional challenges as weak capacity for delivery, the occurrence of corruption, the absence of demand for accountability, and a lack of resources with which to implement their programs.

The Socio-cultural Context

Socio-cultural norms in many countries can leave women without the same resources, time and mobility to engage in politics as men. This greatly impacts women’s participation at the mayoral level, since candidates need a strong political background and adequate financial resources to launch a viable campaign.

The high visibility of mayoral posts means that socio-cultural challenges can be exacerbated. Women often face increased scrutiny from the public and the media, which puts disproportionate and often unrealistic expectations on the performance of women as mayors. In addition, women often do not receive support from men in their families, communities or political parties, and they have to face stereotypes that women are not equally capable to take on important political roles. Safety is another challenge, as women mayors can face significant physical risks. Because of the impact this can have on families, some women decide not to enter political life at all.

NDI believes that increasing women’s role in public life can be achieved only when barriers at the cultural, institutional, and individual levels are addressed. NDI does this through:

- ❖ Increasing women’s *individual* capacity by building their confidence, knowledge and skills needed to participate; and their connections with formal and informal groups holding power and resources;
- ❖ Enhancing women’s access to and the responsiveness of *institutions*, such as political parties, local councils and parliaments; and
- ❖ Addressing the *socio-cultural* norms that undermine the acceptance of and demand for women’s leadership and their full and equal participation in decision-making.

NDI'S PROGRAMMING FOR WOMEN MAYORS

While much of NDI's women's political participation programming has focused on increasing the number of women in legislative office at the national level, the Institute has also conducted numerous programs focused on increasing the participation of women at the local level. These have included several programs that involved women seeking mayoral positions or working with elected women mayors. These programs address the challenges outlined in the previous section. Case studies of two programs from Mexico and Côte d'Ivoire follow, and this report concludes by offering some broad program strategies for supporting women as candidates and mayors.

Academy for Future Women Mayors: Mexico

While Mexican women are making inroads into ever higher positions of political leadership, considerable challenges remain. Despite a series of electoral reforms that sought to increase the number of women candidates, political parties demonstrated a disregard for the intent of these rules in the 2009 federal election cycle when many chose to pay fines rather than comply with the gender quota. Ahead of the 2012 elections, NDI worked with Mexican women to promote more effective enforcement of the quota, and to increase the number participating in politics at the local level, where women held 5.5 percent of municipal positions. NDI found that women lacked the access and skills necessary to compete effectively for political office and were not called on to provide alternative perspectives within parties or help achieve policy consensus.

Within this context, NDI developed and conducted an Academy for Future Women Mayors (the Academy) to help women from all registered political parties gain the skills, networks and motivation needed to win mayoral and other local races. NDI conducted the academy in 2011 and 2012 in the states of Michoacán and Morelos for 90 women activists. The academy was part of a USAID-funded program that sought to foster more accountable, responsive, transparent and effective political parties; strengthen the capacity of women candidates, party activists and elected officials to compete in elections and govern effectively; and increase the capacity of civil society organizations (CSOs) to collaborate with political parties and governments in policy formulation.

Program Design and Strategies

To assess the interests and needs of women mayoral candidates, NDI conducted two focus groups with women who had been candidates to identify obstacles and potential

training topics. The women identified time management, negotiation, volunteer recruitment, leadership, self-confidence and assertiveness as key for women who run for mayoral posts. This information informed the design of the academy curriculum. Materials for the academy drew on existing NDI resources, particularly a training manual developed by NDI Pakistan, which was adapted for the Mexican context and translated into Spanish. The program also used local and international trainers to cover the various topics and balanced both theory and practice in the training curriculum.

The academy was designed to serve as an example of how parties could institutionalize training for women leaders internally. To provide time to review the topics and so participants could build relationships, the academy took place over six months. Altogether, participants received six eight-hour sessions of targeted workshops on the themes identified. The program also sought to promote cross-party engagement, so the women were selected from all of the main parties in numbers proportionate to their representation in the state legislature.

“First, you need self-confidence, belief in yourself. Young women are more prepared than the older generation—they have a lot of tools that we didn't use. Young women give oxygen to politics with new ideas. They refresh political life. — Academy participant

Outcomes

Participants and partners viewed the academy positively, noting that it was meeting a need that no one else was addressing. In Michoacán, nearly 30 percent of the participants (14 of 50) were selected as candidates for state elections, and six were elected—three as mayors. The academy in Morelos was well received by national and state officials and participants. The outgoing state government committed to budgeting for the creation of a full-time training academy for women leaders in the state. Due to a change in political leadership this did not occur, but it was a positive development and something that could be built on in the future to establish a more sustainable training effort.

In addition, NDI trained the Women's Institute of Durango so they could design, implement and evaluate training for women in politics at the municipal level. The model was also used for an indigenous women's training program in Mexico.

Lessons Learned

While participants and partners alike viewed the academy as a success, in the short term it did not result in significant changes to the number of women mayors elected in the two target states. In this context, there are two key lessons that should inform the design and implementation of future programs. These are:

- ❖ **Carefully assess the candidates' readiness.** During the academy, it became clear that many of the women were not yet at a stage in their political careers to be able to launch viable mayoral campaigns for a variety of reasons, including political inexperience. Among those interviewed for the case study, the majority plan to run again. They may very well be successful in subsequent election cycles once they have more experience and are more advanced in their political careers.
- ❖ **Focus in on addressing specific institutional and environmental issues.** More attention was needed during the program to help women develop the skills to negotiate successfully for their party's nomination. Since the gender quota does not apply to local government races, women faced significant challenges negotiating with their parties for a spot as a viable candidate; that is, for a position or in a district where they have a genuine chance to win. Some were unsuccessful in gaining the mayoral nomination at all, while others were put in races they were never likely to win due to other factors—for example, races their party already had slim to no chances of winning.

Participants also faced such other challenges as biased media coverage, corruption and threats of violence. In future programming, these issues could be identified at the outset of a program by a comprehensive contextual analysis. Once identified, these contextualized concerns should be analyzed to evaluate their potential impact, and the possibility for positive change once addressed. Following evaluation, they can be prioritized for action and included in the training on the basis of that prioritization.

Participant Feedback

When participants were asked how they would improve the program, they said they wanted to go deeper into the topics and have more ongoing training and support. Many expressed a desire to receive additional training on how to navigate the realities of politics, campaigning, and holding office—everything from negotiation and fundraising to addressing corruption, handling rejection and personal attacks, violence and security issues. Some suggested that more attention to individual development would be benefi-

cial, such as building self-confidence, leadership and assertiveness.

Fostering Reconciliation Through Women Leaders: Côte d'Ivoire

Côte d'Ivoire has just 10 women mayors out of 197, well below the regional average of 9 percent. Overall, women are poorly represented within the government, holding just 9.4 percent of parliamentary seats. Women elected as mayors report facing disproportionate scrutiny and demands to deliver concrete services and projects for which they have limited or no resources. The barriers to political participation for women on both local and national levels are further complicated by Côte d'Ivoire's recent history and its current reality as a post-conflict society, having seen multiple coup attempts and a civil war in the last two decades.

In light of that context, NDI developed and conducted a program to strengthen women's local leadership and support women-led reconciliation initiatives, with the objective of elevating female voices in Côte d'Ivoire's reconciliation process. Through the program, women mayors were brought together to coordinate, share ideas and receive technical training to build their capacity as leaders, positioning them to address the significant challenge of engaging their communities in reconciliation initiatives. The program provided the women mayors with leadership training; supported them to convene advisory council sessions, local listening sessions and dialogue sessions; and worked with women leaders in civil society to develop a mechanism for regular communication between women in positions of local power.

Program Design

Research suggests that post-conflict reconstruction and governance have better prospects of long-term success when women are involved,⁹ but Ivorian women face challenges that undermine their full participation in political leadership, including in Côte d'Ivoire's reconciliation process itself.

Four communes were selected for this program—Kaniasso, Odienné, Logoualé and Bin-Houyé—and NDI worked with a total of 10 women mayors from these communes to identify their needs and design leadership training to address tensions and reconciliation issues in their communities.

After establishing a baseline of the communities' perceptions of women leaders, NDI delivered a training workshop to assist women in positions of power across the communi-

ties develop leadership skills and promote collaboration between the participants. The workshop was attended by seven women mayors and 11 women civil society leaders. Participants heard from reconciliation experts and former women mayors, and received training in negotiating disputes and mediation techniques, as well as in ways to re-frame conflict as a catalyst for social change. Following a request by the women mayors at the original program orientation, the workshop also included a presentation on fundraising techniques and an overview of the stages of the project cycle, from design to evaluation. After the initial leadership training, with support from NDI, the mayors held local listening sessions in their communes to give community members an opportunity to discuss how they had been impacted by the civil war and post-election crisis.

Outcomes

Participants viewed the program positively, remarking that it gave them tools to begin changing perceptions of women leaders in Côte d'Ivoire. While the program focused on strengthening the leadership of individual women mayors, the approach required the engagement of the whole community: it was designed to bring positive change to the environment in which the women mayors operated and to elevate women's voices in the reconciliation process. Participants felt the program helped shift local perceptions of women leaders for the better. The program also built connections among the mayors, creating a network for sharing support, resources and best practices.

The highly participatory reconciliation efforts led by the women mayors in each commune with NDI's support yielded frank discussions of the communities' major sources of tensions, and defined follow-up activities to begin easing those tensions and creating a more stable peace. The initial listening sessions strengthened and drew attention to existing reconciliation efforts, sparking new interest in older initiatives as well as providing impetus for

One participant in a listening session highlighted his belief that women are better equipped to manage multiple tasks and resolving disputes: "A woman with 10 children can manage them well but a man with two wives has difficulty managing them."

new activities building on the new dialogue. In each commune, advisory councils formed by the women mayors as a result of those listening sessions began to draft action plans based on the community's feedback to address local grievances and facilitate the reconciliation process.

Lessons Learned

As with the Mexico program, participants and partners felt that the program in Côte d'Ivoire would have benefited from a greater focus on the institutional barriers that mayors—and women mayors in particular—face. The key



Women mayors in Côte d'Ivoire, participating as leaders of reconciliation in their communities.

lessons to be applied to the design and implementation of future programs are:

- ❖ **Assess the reality of available resources.** Resources for campaigns or projects are scarce, and the women said political parties favored national parliamentarians over local officials when it came to allocating resources. While the gulf between community expectations for local leaders to deliver large-scale development projects and the reality of scarce resources available to local governments is not a problem specific to women mayors, it greatly complicates the other challenges they face.
- ❖ **Balance community perceptions and relations.** Community relationships were identified by the women mayors as one of the most critical components of a successful tenure. Pre-existing personal relationships within the community were particularly important, but the women also identified continuing communication strategies as key to success, in part because of the minimal support received from the government. However, relationship-building for these women was complicated; they were obliged to show confidence while appearing humble, particularly with male constituents, and to be forceful without showing anger.
- ❖ **Recognizing the reach and impact of stereotypes.** While some traditional perceptions of women were positive—for example, that women were better managers and were more trustworthy than men—women mayors faced many negative stereotypes, ranging from criticism of their dress and home life to the belief that women should not be in a leadership position at all. Women mayors also had to maintain a careful balance in their personal lives; for example, by letting their husbands feel that they were still the leader of the household to retain support for their careers.

PROGRAM GUIDANCE

Based on the challenges to increasing the number and effectiveness of women mayors, and drawing on the lessons and successes of these NDI programs, NDI has identified several recommendations for future programming:

- ❖ **Strong Contextual Analysis.** Each case study presented here is set within a particular local context that plays a significant role in the success or challenges faced by any program. Local contexts can differ considerably even within a country, and the structures of local governance vary widely between regions and countries. In some countries local governments function fairly independently and in others they are appointed;

in some countries local officials are distant from national parties while in others they are closely connected. For any program to be effective, it must take into account both the country and the local context.



- ❖ **Address the Candidate Nomination Process.** Programming needs to address the challenges that women face to gain a nomination within their parties. While many programs are focused on encouraging women to run and equipping them to do so, programs must consider the institutional challenges aspiring women mayoral candidates may face; in many contexts a significant aspect will be the political parties themselves. Programs should consider complementary political party strengthening initiatives that foster openness and transparency in the party's internal processes. Simultaneously, women may need to develop their skills in negotiation and practice these skills so they are ready to take on difficult negotiations within their parties. To strengthen their ability to negotiate, it is important to build their knowledge of legal and electoral frameworks at the local level so they are aware of

their rights and can advocate for themselves more effectively.

- ❖ **Foster Women's Effective Engagement with the Media.** Programs should include media and messaging training for women mayors and mayoral candidates, but they should also work to build the media's awareness of gender-balanced reporting. Women mayors often face increased scrutiny in their roles, which makes it difficult for aspiring candidates to gain support. Programs can also highlight the positive contributions of women mayors to increase their visibility as political leaders and role models.
- ❖ **Recognize the Links between Women's Participation as Mayors and the Need for Enhanced Security.** The role of mayor is highly visible, and it is important that programs discuss security concerns and strategies for safety with women candidates and elected officials. One strategy is to link with existing organizations and initiatives providing support to women and/or monitoring violence against women generally, or violence against women in politics specifically if such efforts exist. Another strategy may be to include training to strengthen women leaders' understanding of their legal rights and protections, empowering them to seek recourse more effectively when needed.
- ❖ **Provide Targeted Knowledge and Skill Building for Local Executive Role.** Given the role of mayor as the executive authority and manager of the municipal government, training on public administra-

tion, consensus building and deliberative processes is an important aspect of programming support. This should be specific to women seeking mayoral office or in addition to broader training for women at the local level, since the functions of the role are unique.

- ❖ **Emphasize Mentoring and Networking.** Programs should consider ways to build mentoring relationships and networks among women both as candidates and mayors. Given the lack of women in local executive positions, women will benefit from the experiences of those that have succeeded in reaching these positions and can provide mentorship and support. It is worth exploring existing networks for women leaders at the local level in the country or region as a starting point. For example, in Latin America and in Africa, the Latin American Network of Local Governments Women Elected Associations (RedLamugol) and the Network of Local Elected Women of Africa (REFELA) respectively, are working to foster this type of coordination.
- ❖ **Prioritize Follow Up.** Programs should offer ongoing support and follow up. For many women, the road to local executive office will take time and may first require building their skills and political experience before they run for office, or they may run several times before winning. Once in office, it is beneficial for programs to consider supporting women to help address the new barriers they face and foster their meaningful participation.



ADDITIONAL NDI PROGRAM EXAMPLES

Nicaragua

In 2013, NDI and UN Women held a series of workshops entitled, *Getting a Head Start: Successful Female Politicians*. The workshops were designed for women mayors and municipal council members elected in 2012 from all political parties. The goal was to increase the participants' effectiveness in a political environment through improved public management, including the promotion of gender-focused public policy and effective communication with their constituents.

The workshop was held in four areas of Nicaragua over a three month period. The sessions covered: key elements of the Nicaraguan municipal legal framework; principles and practices focusing on gender in public policy; and negotiation, consensus-building, and effective political communication. The program provided a rare opportunity for Nicaraguan women politicians to meet and build a network of support across party lines. Participants later said it gave them a new sense of empowerment, enabled them to implement new strategies and become “models of good governance.”¹⁰

Burkina Faso

NDI worked with a group of locally elected women in Burkina Faso in 2011 to create a women's caucus at the local level that included women mayors. The Institute helped the caucus create rules of procedure, a strategic plan and an action plan. The caucus was created to bring women together to implement gender equality policies at the local level, and specifically to:

Organize and strengthen the participation of women in local governance; develop a strategy for the inclusion of women; work toward equal participation of women in local governance; and promote both increased numbers and meaningful representation of women in elected bodies of government at all levels.

The caucus is still functional and is currently chaired by a woman mayor.

Honduras

Despite a gender quota that requires that women make up 40 percent of candidate lists, there are still few women elected officials; only 22 of 298 municipalities have a woman mayor. Building on successes with national-level women parliamentarian workshops, NDI expanded its work to include women mayors and community council members (*regidoras*) elected in November 2013. In the fall of 2014, NDI conducted workshops to share tools for effective municipal governance and public policy creation with approximately 25 women mayors and community council members to help improve their capacity to govern effectively and increase their possibility for re-election in 2017. The workshops were designed to create a network of women elected officials that the parliamentarians, mayors and councilmembers can continue to draw on for support and ideas as they fulfill their terms.

Macedonia

In April 2014, NDI introduced programming aimed at increasing women's political representation at the local level, particularly as mayoral candidates. Although some progress had been made in the 2013 local elections with the election of four women mayors—as compared to the 2009 elections, when no women were elected as mayor—this figure represents less than 5 percent of total mayoral posts. Given that context, NDI began working with the four main political parties to identify possible candidates and municipalities where they will consider fielding women mayoral candidates in the 2017 municipal elections.

During the first stage of the project in 2014, NDI commissioned research from a local organization to assess which of Macedonia's municipalities are economically and demographically best suited to a local election campaign where the principal mayoral candidates are women. Based on the findings, NDI will provide advice and training on local government and campaign management to women candidates in those areas, in coordination with political parties.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?

Having completed this research on the experiences of women mayors and the investigation of these case studies, important questions have emerged regarding the experiences of women leaders in cities. Urbanization around the world is growing at unprecedented rates: more than 50 percent of the world's population lives in cities, which generate 70 percent of GDP globally.¹¹ While women are now the largest migrant group to cities as they travel to find work and escape poverty, they are less likely than men to have access to employment, education, healthcare, assets, and housing.¹² Effective city-building is a critical challenge faced by every state. Even more challenging is the effective management and governance of the world's growing "middleweight" and megacities.¹³ As cities grow in importance on the global stage, however, women remain excluded from conversations on local governance. Where women are part of the conversation, the focus on them is framed around their economic empowerment, property rights, security or health, not on their engagement as political actors.

While neither of the programs examined here took place in major cities, the key strategies they identified are transferrable, given the proper contextual analysis. For safe and sustainable cities, it matters whether women are represented in local government and can influence the siting of street lighting or rely on local officials to enforce health and safety standards at their places of work. When women's decision-making power on a local level increases, so does the provision of public goods. In India, for example, increased women's participation through local political quotas led to an improvement in public services such as water delivery, sanitation and schools, while local corruption decreased and the perceptions of women's leadership grew more favorable, including the perceptions among the parents of girls.¹⁴ A focus on women's experience in urban environments as candidates, elected leaders and clients of local government services and regulations would fill an important gap in light of the increasing global influence of cities. It would also complement the research detailed here, by examining more closely the opportunities, impact and engagement of women in city leadership, and would continue to improve programming by identifying best practices and lessons learned in urban contexts.



References

1. More data is expected to be available later in 2015 when UN Women is due to release the next report on “The World’s Women,” which details trends and statistics worldwide.
2. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/feb/24/afghanistan-first-female-mayor>, <http://globalvoicesonline.org/2009/06/29/morocco-celebrating-the-first-female-mayor-of-marrakesh/>, <http://articles.latimes.com/2009/mar/08/world/fg-egypt-mayor8>
3. United Nations Statistics Division. *World’s Women 2010: Trends and Statistics*. 2010. p. 120.
4. United Nations Statistics Division. *World’s Women 2010: Trends and Statistics*. 2010. p. 120.
5. *The Equality Agenda of United Cities and Local Governments*, <http://issuu.com/uclgcglu/docs/uclg-women-en?e=5168798/2752455>.
6. NDI is conducting this research under the Paths to Power project through funding from the Kate Spade Foundation, which is the philanthropic arm of Kate Spade & Company, formerly Liz Claiborne, Inc. The views expressed in this report are the authors’ and not those of the foundation.
7. <http://iknowpolitics.org/en/knowledge-library/interview/adelma-salas>
8. <http://iknowpolitics.org/en/knowledge-library/interview/sylviana-murni>
9. Chinkin, C. (2003) “Peace Agreements as a Means for Promoting Gender Equality and Ensuring the Participation of Women.” United Nations: Division for the Advancement of Women.
10. [“A ‘Head Start’ for Women Mayors and Councilors in Nicaragua,”](#) 2013.
11. UN Habitat
12. UN Habitat, “Gender Responsive Urban Economy,” 2014.
13. A megacity is commonly defined as having over 10 million inhabitants, while a middleweight city has between 150,000 and 10 million inhabitants.
14. World Bank, World Development Report 2012.



National Democratic Institute
455 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington DC, 20001