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POLITICS

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Network of **Women** in Politics

Summary of the e-Discussion on
Funding for Women Candidates

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LAUNCHING MESSAGE

Women continue to be severely underrepresented in decision-making processes and bodies across the world at all levels. In fact, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) reports only [23% of members of parliament](#) (MPs) are women. A major contributing factor to this is the unequal access to the resources needed to successfully seek nominations or participate in electoral campaigns. It has been increasingly recognized that politics [dominated by money, more often than not, is politics dominated by men](#). IPU conducted a [survey](#) in 2008 of 300 MPs affirming that campaign financing was one of the biggest obstacles faced by women. This was later confirmed in research done by UN women in 2013,¹ wherein over 80% of the respondents identified access to financing as one of the biggest barriers to enter politics. The costs of running for office varies greatly across countries and the barriers faced by women differ depending on context. Systemic issues such as lower economic status and lack of economic independence affect women globally, effectively placing barriers for women's participation in politics.²

While there are several factors that affect women's political participation, electoral systems are key among them. Majority-based and candidate-centered systems tend to require more self-funding from candidates, putting women at a disadvantage. Costs will often be incurred in attempting to win a primary election, and then in the election period. Party primaries can be very expensive and act as an obstacle for women's participation as they often require significant self-funding. Proportional systems typically require less fundraising from the individual candidate and are therefore considered favorable to women. This is due to political parties bearing the biggest costs for campaigning. However, political parties often stand as gate-keepers, nominating men they believe are more likely to attract more private funding due to ingrained gender stereotypes.

In many countries, the role of private funding is diminished due to the provision of public funding from the state. Around 30 countries have introduced public funding measures that promote the nomination and election of women into decision-making bodies. This may include earmarking funds for activities supporting women's participation, such as providing direct funding for women's wings; withholding funding for parties that do not reach a threshold of women nominated; or increasing funding for parties with higher levels of gender equality. International IDEA's latest [report](#) on the matter indicates that gender targeted public funding is only effective in countries where the funding amounts are high in relation to private funding; when the potential losses in public funding for not nominating women is high; and the connection between public funding and gender equality is sufficient to overcome gender prejudices within political parties. In contexts where parties do not rely on public funding, the penalties for not complying are low and gender-targeted public funding is unlikely to be effective.

Objective of the e-Discussion

iKNOW Politics and its partners convened this e-Discussion **from May 15 to June 19, 2018** to seek input from political party leaders and members, politicians, experts, practitioners, and researchers on the challenges and opportunities of funding for women candidates and its role in promoting women's political

¹ UN Women undertook an assessment of parliamentarians and activists during the 57th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women in New York in March 2013, and with members of the iKNOW Politics network, <http://www.iknowpolitics.org>. A total of 70 respondents provided their views on the issue of political financing.

² For a comprehensive analysis of the challenges in receiving funding faced by women across the world, please see the chapter "Women in Politics: Financing for Gender Equality" in [Funding of Political Parties and Election Campaigns: A Handbook on Political Finance](#)

participation. The submissions contributed to the elaboration of a Consolidated Reply that will augment the knowledge base available on campaign funding and its impact on women's political participation.

Questions:

1. In your experience, what are the main challenges women encounter in raising funds for elections in your country?
2. Are there any examples of innovative ways of fundraising used by women candidates?
3. What are the good practices in political parties to support the nomination and fundraising for women candidates?
4. What measures can governments establish to financially support women candidates? And how can these be effectively enforced?

CONTRIBUTIONS

The e-Discussion on [Funding for Women Candidates](#) took place from 15 May to 19 June 2018. Twelve contributions were submitted by the following users:

1. [Akua Sena Dansua](#), first female Minister of State in the history of Ghana, former Member of Parliament (MP) and Ambassador of Ghana to Germany, **Ghana**
2. [Ana Kadovic](#), Resident Director, NDI, **Albania**
3. [Anonymous](#)
4. [Dr. Ameenah Al-Rasheed](#), iKNOW Politics Expert, Consultant, former Assistant Professor and UN Regional Advisor, **UK**
5. [Dr. Santosh Kumar Mishra](#), Technical Assistant, Population Education Resource Centre (PERC), Women's University (SNDTWU), **India**
6. [Expert from the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy \(NIMD\)](#), **Netherlands**
7. [Fatma Aytac](#), Co-Chairwoman of the Women's Party, **Turkey**
8. [Jayne Cravens](#), international consultant, researcher and trainer in communications and community engagement, **USA**
9. [Leonie Morgan](#), Co-founder of EMILY's List, **Australia**
10. [Mawuli Dake](#), Moremi Initiative for Women's Leadership in Africa, **Ghana**
11. [Regina Mundi](#), Senator and leading member of a political party (the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement), **Cameroon**
12. [Yuki Hamada](#), International IDEA, **Sweden**

DISCUSSION SUMMARY

iKNOW Politics and its partners thank their followers for taking the time to participate in this e-Discussion and share experiences, practices and recommendations. The contributions are summarized below.

1. **In your experience, what are the main challenges women encounter in raising funds for elections in your country?**

Money is a must for competing in elections. The lack of adequate funding is often an obstacle for women who wish to enter politics as it prevents them from planning and implementing their outreach activities, policy development and other campaign efforts. The main challenges participants agree on are the influence of gender stereotypes on voters and donors' perceptions of women in politics and the generalized lower economic status of women compared to men.

Senator and party leader Regina Mundi says it is difficult for women in **Cameroon** to raise campaign funds because donors, often believing women are unlikely to win elections and be successful leaders, are reluctant to provide financial support to women candidates. Senator Mundi argues that this dynamic creates a snowball effect as one needs money to raise money, which places ever-growing difficulties on women in approaching and convincing donors. A participant from the **United States** joins this view by adding that one of the barriers women across countries face is the Tall Poppy Syndrome: often, people are inclined to cut the tallest poppy, the one that tries and dares to stand out - and in this case, the tall poppy is a woman seeking political office and other types of leadership positions.

The first female Minister in the history of **Ghana**, former MP and current Ambassador to Germany, Akua Sena Dansua, shares that women suffer from a myriad of challenges when it comes to fundraising for elections in her country. These include sexual harassment by male donors and/or the fear of it and the general lack of financial means at women's disposal and consequent collateral security to obtain loans from financial institutions for elections.

The lack of transparency in parties' candidate recruitment and nomination is one of the main challenges women face. The Co-Chairwoman of the Women's Party in **Turkey**, Fatma Aytac, points out that some electoral systems and political party laws hinder women's access to political finance. In Turkey, party leaders usually decide on the candidates, and even though some parties have instated internal gender quotas, party leaders often place women in unwinnable positions or simply do not follow the quotas.

The Resident Director of the National Democratic Institute (NDI) Office in **Albania**, Ana Kadovic, shares that NDI launched in 2016 a program to help Albanian political parties strengthen and sustain internal practices on financial management, accountability, and transparency; and to advance public debate on political finance through cross-party efforts for reform. The program experts concluded that securing winnable places on party lists for women and youth remains challenging in the absence of access to financial resources and transparent candidate nomination and selection procedures. It was also concluded that access to funding is particularly critical during the nomination stage. Aspirants bringing resources for the party or the campaign are often given priority and women, even if proven competent organizers and leaders, are often overlooked.

In Albania, party wings, such as those of women and youth, depend on party headquarters for funding. Given the centralized decision-making process within parties, wings are either discouraged or simply unable to fundraise on their own. A respondent shared with NDI that "even the banners and hall that we use for the women's wing congress is printed and provided for us by the party. We cannot choose." Besides one party that has committed to allocate a specific percentage of its budget to women and youth wings, the widespread centralized decision-making process and the lack of budgetary transparency of political parties hinders women and youth's ability to advocate for budgetary allocations.

2. Are there any examples of innovative ways of fundraising used by women candidates?

Attaining elected political office depends on the ability of candidates and parties to build connections with voters through strategic campaigning. This requires time and money. As we have seen, the latter is particularly difficult to raise for women. Equality in Decision Making's (EDM) research in **Albania** found that self-financing, including contributions from family members, is an important source of funding for women candidates. It also found that donations from individual citizens, friends and/or businesses is lower. The study noted that:

"Albania society lacks a culture of political fundraising. In the EDM's study, 28% of women candidates interviewed reported that fundraising is necessary, but considered it to be a responsibility of the party. Of those who agree that fundraising is necessary,

only 13% reported that they know how to raise funds compared to 24% who reported that they lack the capacity to raise funds. Only 7% overall reported that fundraising during the electoral campaign is not necessary.”

Although cash is important in supporting electoral campaigns, there are other ways individuals can help women candidates conduct their campaigns. Senator Regina Mundi shares a simple and effective method she personally tested in one of her campaigns in **Cameroon**: “I sat down with my daughters and made a list of all my acquaintances. I was surprised it was a long list. I called those I could and wrote simple letters to some. The responses were good. Some sent me airtime credit. Others fuel for my car.”

Ghanian Ambassador to Germany Akua Sena Dansua says that campaign fundraising may be context-specific and may not be restricted to cash. She argues that grassroots associations can be strong allies of women candidates as they can support with voter outreach with little or no cost. Leonie Morgan, an EMILY’s List Australia Co-founder, provides an example of how civil society organizations can support women candidates. In **Australia**, EMILY’s List has a dedicated fund to distribute ‘early money’ among women candidates to help them launch their campaigns and/or facilitate further fundraising. The NGO also gives its followers the opportunity to donate and volunteer in endorsed campaigns.

The use of digital media, such as campaign website and blogs, in general and social media in particular can have quite an impact in campaign outreach, especially in reaching the youth. Unlike traditional media platforms, social media, mainly Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, offers the possibility to reach the public rapidly at no or little cost. It also enables candidates to target specific demographics for specific messages and calls to action.

To counter the challenges women in **Africa** face in campaign fundraising, the Vice President of Liberia Jewel Taylor proposed at the recent Mo Ibrahim Governance Weekend in Rwanda the establishment of a women’s political trust fund. This initiative came after she and many other female politicians in attendance acknowledged fundraising was one of the biggest challenges they face in politics. A working group is yet to be formed and implement this vision under the leadership of the African Development Bank.

3. What are the good practices in political parties to support the nomination and fundraising for women candidates?

Participants argue that many political parties provide superficial and limited efforts to improve women’s political participation that lead to no real influence or decision-making power. NDI and UNDP’s guidebook on [Empowering Women for Stronger Political Parties](#) (2012) provides examples of such efforts:

- The establishment of women’s wings with no authority
- The selection of so-called female place holders on candidate lists
- The marginalization of female politicians after their election
- The placement of women candidates in districts with low chances to win
- The removal of women candidates from winnable list positions at the last moment

Political parties should refrain from such tendencies to give the space for women to advance within their structures and get elected. As the global trend moves towards inclusive democratic governance, active outreach to traditionally under-represented groups such as youth and women is increasingly becoming an essential component of political parties’ strategies. Contributors call for the need for affirmative action to be incorporated in political parties’ rules and regulations to ensure women’s inclusion, their selection on candidate lists, and positive discrimination in the allocation of party funds.

The internal party quota is an effective way, if followed correctly, to quickly increase women's inclusion and ensure their meaningful participation in elections and party decision-making processes. For quotas to have meaningful impact, women candidates must be treated equally in regard to list placement: If they are placed systematically in unwinnable positions, the gender proportions among candidates will not transfer to elected positions.

Political parties can also put in place measures to dedicate a certain proportion of their budget to the women's wing. This would allow women wings to train women candidates and support their campaign efforts in election times. For this to be effective, it is important to have accountability and enforcement mechanisms to monitor the implementation of such initiatives.

4. What measures can governments establish to financially support women candidates? And how can these be effectively enforced?

Governments have a key role to play in facilitating the inclusion of minorities in decision-making bodies and processes. Recommendations advanced by participants include:

- Limiting campaign budgets to reduce the fundraising races
- Ensuring transparency in campaign financing to limit the use of illegal money and networks/companies
- Strengthening the mandate and operating budget of the Electoral Management Body to properly monitor campaign spending and hold political parties to account
- Provide interest free loans to women candidates
- Deduct taxes from donors financing women candidates' campaigns
- Introducing financial incentives for political to increase women's political participation

On the last recommendation, the recent International IDEA report [Gender-targeted Public Funding for Political Parties: A Comparative Analysis](#) (2018) includes a series of country specific examples of how public funding can be a powerful financial incentive for political parties to be more gender inclusive. For example, in **Haiti**, to access the gender-targeted public funding political parties have to nominate women to at least half of the available seats and succeed in having half of those elected. In **Georgia**, political parties that receive public funding can get 30% additional funding if their candidate lists have at least 30% of both genders in each of the first three sets of 10 names on lists. In **Moldova**, political parties that nominate women to 40% or more of their seats in the single member constituencies have access to more funding.

Since 2008 in **Albania**, political parties are required to nominate at least 30% of both genders, or else their public funding would be reduced. Additionally, parties that fail to place women in at least one of the top three positions in candidate lists are subject to sanctions. After these measures entered into effect, Albania experienced a sharp increase in the number of women nominated by parties, growing from 9% to 32% in the 2009 election. Since then, the number of women candidates and women elected have been steadily rising, with 40% of women candidates and 28% of women elected in 2017.

Gender-targeted public funding can work to increase women's political participation, but only in specific cases. If the share of total party income received from public sources is high, like it is the case in Albania where roughly 90% of political parties' budget comes from public funding, the incentive to nominate women is then significant. There is an important link between the proportion of public funding and the level of gender balance achieved among candidates and elected office.