

SDC GENDERNET PARTNER LEARNING DAY

Women's Political Leadership

Friday September 18, 2020

Virtual

From 9h00-13h00



SDC Gendernet: Partner Learning Day 2020

3 Cases from 3 Places

Dear partners and colleagues,

We are pleased to share with you the three case studies we will be learning from and expanding on during tomorrow's Partner Learning Day event.

You will be pre-assigned to a specific group and will focus on one of the three cases, however all three experiences provide complementary insights and food for thought. Hence we are sharing all three for your reference.

We hope that you can find time to familiarize yourself with all three cases beforehand. This will enrich both the more case specific break out group exchanges and our plenary discussions where there will be an opportunity to interact with all three case holders.

With kind regards,

The organizing team.

INTRODUCING OUR 3 CASES FROM 3 PLACES



Leadership and Peace Building for Young Women



Codou Bop
Local Consultant
For IAMANEH

SDC Gendernet: Partner Learning Day 2020

Women's Political Leadership: Project Case Study

Capacity Building in Leadership and Peace for Young Women in Kaolack, Senegal

Submitted by

IAMANEH

Contact

Codou Bop

codou.bop@gmail.com

Introducing the Project

The project was carried out under the international "Women's Empowerment and Leadership Development for Democratization" project funded by the Funding Leadership and Opportunities for Women programme of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs on behalf of the International Solidarity Network of Women Living under Muslim Laws (WLUML) and implemented by its partner in Senegal, the Groupe de Recherche sur les Femmes et les Lois au Senegal (GREFELS) coordinated by Codou Bop. The overall goal of the project was to increase feminist leadership and peace building at the highest site of power in rural and urban areas, that is, the county government. It targeted young female leaders living in 3 counties in Kaolack region, Senegal.

Overall goal and key objectives/ Type of political leadership supported

Location

Senegal

Province of Kaolack and county level

- To build the skills to enable young female leaders to engage in activism for their rights, increase their self-confidence and to act collectively in order to bring many women into the elected councils.
- Initiate a process to make local authorities accountable to the populations and to help populations understand that being accountable is a duty for a leader.
- Collectively identify sources of conflicts between women, in family and community and in the political arena

Context specifics

Senegal is a democracy where elections take place every 5 years.

- The project took place in 2014 within an enabling context characterized by:

Implementation of major institutional reforms aiming to insure full legal personality and financial autonomy to local counties. As a result, local counties are free to be administrated by councils elected by universal suffrage. The councils are responsible for designing, programming and implementing all economic, social and environmental programs in relation to the local development. However, this decentralization of authority was not accompanied with budget and other resources support, leaving the local counties on their own to self resource, crippling them in their capacity and motivation to even attempt to fulfill their mandate and exercise their authority.

- The passing of the law on full parity with men for all electoral positions, with the result that women making 50% of elected councils that are the decision making body of the local community, will have more opportunities and capacities to contribute in choices on policies to be implemented in their areas.
- The fact that the project was carried out by the Association for the Promotion of Senegalese Women, IAMANEH's partner in Kaolack that is a trusted female NGO known to develop an innovative approach that strategically combines a focus on women's rights, combat gender based violence and the promotion of women's social, political and economic equality through leadership training, financial and technical support to income generation activities.
- Key social considerations include among others gender inequalities between men and women, but also between elders and youth, unequal distribution of power and resources with men traditionally holding authority over women and controlling economic resources, particularly land.

Key constraints and risks for women's political empowerment and leadership identified and addressed by the project

- Class and age position of women who were targeted by the project. Most of them were young in gerontocratic society and poor, less educated and less self-confident in their capacities to hold high positions
- Corruption and the practice of giving money or presents to voters to be elected
- Lack of unity and solidarity between female candidates
- Violence usually accompanying the processes of elections in Senegal.

What are the key conclusions?

Key Good Practices

What strategies/interventions worked and how?

- Taking time for conceptualizing in local language and based on participant's experience, what, for example patriarchy, power, leadership or governance versus corruption, decentralization and local sustainable development means and what impact on their personal and collective lives and communities
- Alliance-building and solidarity between generations, sexes, classes and location etc.
 - Mutual learning and strategizing through group work, and forum.
 - Forum for Public and Open Debate to which community leaders (political, religious and customary) are invited to provide account on selected issues: for example, initiatives taken to advance education/ or improve health, or provide jobs/ or solve environmental problems etc.) Due to budget constraints, this Forum will take place in one county and selected leaders from the two other counties will be invited. It is expected that they initiate similar forums in their own county.
 - Follow up of activities via Advocacy Committees consisting of community members, already set up by GREFELS and the associate partner in this project, APROFES.

Key Lessons Learned

Why was a strategy/intervention successful? What are decisive factors for success?

- This activity was context specific and responded to concerns of women located in Kaolack:
 - Skills were built, having in mind to make participants understand the roots of their subordination (at all levels: family, community, nation and unequal relations with Western countries) and the capacities of society (women and men) to change this situation.
 - Linking these women with other women's associations (legal, business etc.) with particular expertise can help bridge critical capacity and resource gaps, improving their strategies resulting in successful campaigning, which in turn can ultimately benefit all these different women's groups e.g. supreme court passing a law which became binding at national level protecting women and girls in the public sphere.

What were obstacles failures, what did we learn from that and how did we adapt?

- The main obstacle in this project was the opposition of the mayor of Kaolack who is a woman. Women are not a homogenous group, and we should not assume they all have similar needs and shared interests, or that a woman is by default gender sensitive or pro-gender equality.

Recommendations

- To help a maximum of women become their own change-makers, thinking and strategizing should start from the grass roots level.
- To have a holistic approach to women's issues: combining the fight for political rights with economic and bodily rights.
- To have a gendered vision: examine inequalities between sexes, but also among women, and among women from different ages and locations.
- Provide more resources and build knowledge through more training.



Supporting Palestinian Women in Local Politics



Rafah Anebtawi
Kayan Organization
For Cfd

SDC Gendernet: Partner Learning Day 2020

Women's Political Leadership: Project Case Study

Supporting Palestinian Women's Participation in Local Politics

Submitted by *Cfd – the feminist peace organization*

Contact Marina Peterhans; marina.peterhans@cfd-ch.org



Introducing the Project

In 2016, [cfd](#) together with its partner organisation [Kayan's Women Organisation](#) implemented a three-years project titled "Promoting Arab Women's Participation in Politics" in preparation for the local council elections in 2018 in Israel. The project is still ongoing. **The purpose of the project is to create the necessary conditions for Arab women to participate in local politics, to get into office, and for women's needs to become a part of local political agendas.** To achieve this purpose, the project worked on mutually re-enforcing levels, targeting grassroots women's groups and empowering grassroots leaders to influence political decision-making, raising awareness in the Arab civil society, as well as working with Arab political decision makers and candidates to be more responsive to women's issues.

The project was successful: Out of 10 grassroots groups, 2 women have been elected in the municipal elections, one of the candidates became the first ever elected woman in her respective local council. It was also the first time in Israel that an Arab women's list succeeded in getting a candidate into office. Following on this initial stage of the project, Kayan has continued to support current women local councilors (including by producing research on their experiences) and to challenge problematic social norms about women's leadership and role in decision-making. Kayan is also gearing up to start again with its comprehensive empowerment process in the lead up to the 2023 elections

Overall goal and key objectives/

Location

Type of political leadership supported

Israel, Palestinian society

Outcome 1: Local Grassroots women are prepared to be political activists and political candidates.

Outcome 2: Gender-inclusivity and women's needs are part of the local agenda. Current local Arab politicians are promoting gender-inclusivity and gender-sensitivity in the political sphere.

Outcome 3: A widespread women-led awareness raising and public outreach campaign on women's involvement in politics has impacted political parties, the media and civil society.

Context specifics

The Israeli system of government is based on parliamentary democracy. The municipalities are run by local councils. The Arab society displays their identity and political representation mainly in the local council. However, the municipal elections are often determined by familial clans and patriarchal social norms. In Israel, out of a total of 800 council members, only 9 were Arab women. This disproportional representation has left and still leaves Arab women vulnerable, as their needs are rarely addressed within political bodies, nor included in public budgets. Issues like women's health, gender-based violence, women's employment, and women's economic security are often ignored by politicians who have little incentive to include women's concerns in their political agendas. Although there are several local women grassroots movements, they are not adequately represented in any political body, and as a result, their security, well-being, and needs are not advocated for in local, national, or regional political bodies.

Arab women's political exclusion is not just a result of grassroots women lacking knowledge or capacities. Rather, their exclusion stems from a patriarchal and traditional social structure in which women are confined to the domestic sphere.

Through the project, *cfd* and Kayan have promoted Arab women's participation in local political processes by addressing the root causes of their exclusion, and have strived to ensure that gender-inclusivity is included in the political agenda of local Arab political parties.

Key constraints and risks for women's political empowerment and leadership identified and addressed by the project

The root cause of Arab women's exclusion from politics is a patriarchal and traditional social structure that minimizes women's participation in the public by pressuring women to remain in the domestic sphere, by denying women leadership opportunities, and by silencing women's voices. Furthermore, as a national minority the Arab society often puts its focus on gaining equality within Israel, women's oppression is seen as a lesser issue, which further marginalizes Arab women in Israel.

The project has directly challenged the traditional role of women by working on three levels.

First: Empowerment of grassroots women with the knowledge and tools to become political activists and political candidates. As women have been denied the opportunity to engage in politics, they lack basic knowledge about the political processes, and do not fulfil their civil right of participating in politics. By supporting the women through a process of political education, political empowerment, and political action, **the project has brought women's voices into local Arab politics.**

Second: As it is still widely accepted that a woman's place is at home rather than in politics, awareness raising on women's rights amongst both, politicians and civil society at large, is key. As duty bearers, the politicians must take a public stance on gender-equality, and should take responsibility for increasing gender-inclusivity in politics. By conducting gender awareness workshops with decision makers and political candidates and helping them designing political action plans, **the women's groups were able to bring gender issues onto the political agenda and establishing themselves as political advocates for the community interests.**

Third: as all of Arab civil society is responsible for maintaining or changing the social norms, challenging the current status quo through awareness-raising amongst civil society at large and 12th grade Arab students, who will be first time voters. **Through this bottom-up approach, the project aimed at encouraging the society at large to promote gender-inclusivity in public life, and support gender-equality in politics.**



What are the key conclusions?

Key Good Practices

What strategies/interventions worked and how?

- The women candidates came out of active women's grassroots groups, who have started the empowerment process before and have been active in civil society. The project was therefore a continuation of an already ongoing empowerment process: from women's empowerment to direct political participation and representation.
- Systemic approach: empowerment and capacity building of women's groups while also raising awareness of political leaders, clans, families and wider community.
- Promotion of political inclusion beyond the local elites, but on grassroots level
- Direct political participation as step towards collective empowerment.

Key Lessons Learned

- *Why was a strategy/intervention successful? What are decisive factors for success?*
- *What were obstacles failures, what did we learn from that and how did we adapt?*
 - The political candidates were part of an already existing grassroots group, which gave them the necessary back-up and strength to promote their candidature and face challenges and obstacles successfully.
 - Most women who were running for election have been leaders in another area before or have had political aspirations, but lacked the knowledge, confidence and possibility to present their candidacy.
 - Most successful candidates have been the ones running their own list rather than integrating into an existing or familial party.
 - The work with political leaders and other male candidates was crucial in achieving partial support for the women's candidates and from the communities at large.

Recommendations

- Financial expenses of election campaign should be better planned for: Need to emphasize on fundraising skills and early budgeting of campaign expenses.
- Better prepare the groups on the different scenarios of the election process and its implication for their group, their community as well as their families to more effectively cope with negative implications of political campaigns (e.g. internal clan rivalries, negative social media speeches etc.)
- As part of the project, it was agreed on that the contact between the partner organization and the grassroots groups would be minimal during the last three months prior to the election date for reasons of political non-affiliation. This has led to frustrations, but was a precondition for the agreement between the partner organization and the grassroots' groups. However, some grassroots groups felt neglected during the stressful end of the campaign.



Networking across Party Lines for Inclusive Policies and Local Development



Valbona Karakaçi
HELVETAS
Regional Program Advisor

Women's Political Leadership: Project Case Study

Local Development and Decentralization Program (DLDP)

Submitted by

Valbona.Karakaci

Contact

Valbona.Karakaci@helvetas.org

Overall goal and key objectives/ Type of political leadership supported

Location

Albania (National and subnational levels)

Project summary

Dldp is a program of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) implemented by HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation.

The project goal was: *inclusive quality service delivery to citizens (men and women) is improved through strengthened capacities of local government units (LGUs) in Northern Albania, anchored Dldp products at the national level and by contributing to a conducive legal framework.*

Starting in 2011, Dldp supported the “**Women in Politics Network**” (WiPN).

The Network was the *initiative of women elected local councilors of the Regions of Shkodra and Lezha (approx.340,426 (49% female) which then expanded countrywide. The WiP is an informal network of women who are part of political party's structures and represent them in decision making bodies such as Local Councils. WiPN was identified as an innovative instrument to engender governance and mainstream social inclusion.*

The achievements of the Dldp are being leveraged and expanded on with a new SDC project “Strong Municipalities”, aiming to empower administrators, legislators and citizens in all 61 Albanian municipalities by building efficient and effective local governance. The WiP Network is considered a key driver of change.

The end beneficiaries of Dldp were:

- Citizens in the municipalities of Northern Albania – approximately 830,981 (48% are female_

The direct beneficiaries of Dldp were:

- Administration of municipalities in the North
- Administration of municipalities country wide
- Public administration service at central and local level

Context specifics

Type of political/governance system

Albania's current political framework is provided for in the 1998 constitution known as Kushtetuta. The constitution established the country as a **parliamentary representative democratic republic**. After 45 years of post WWII communism, Albania began its democratic transition in 1991, setting out to establish a pluralist political system that protects and advances fundamental human rights. Since then, Albania has joined NATO and is a candidate for European Union membership. Municipalities, called "bashki" in Albanian, have engaged in a national process of decentralization (incl territorial administrative reform). The mayors and local councils are directly elected and are responsible for provision of local services to their inhabitants (local roads, water supply and sewage, urban planning, partially education and health services, promotion of economic development etc.). The councilors are elected based on the multi-named lists of political parties or independent candidates.

Conflict or post conflict situation

Albanian politics is highly polarized and prone to disruptive partisanship that impedes progress towards anti-corruption and rule-of-law reforms that are necessary for EU accession. Civil society is active but frustrated by a lack of access to decision-makers, and many Albanians feel disconnected from their elected representatives – although parliament is taking steps to make the legislative process more open and participatory.

Legal framework conditions related to women's political participation and empowerment

Albania strives to establish/achieve a functioning democracy in the framework of its bid for EU membership. Gender equality in political representation constitutes an important aspect of the criteria required for Albania's EU integration. The legal framework in force entails many positive aspects, yet the legal principle of fair representation has not been yet morphed into a sustained political culture and into a viable legal obligation. After 2008, Albania started applying new and improved standards geared towards the effective advancement of gender equality in politics.

- **Constitution of the Republic of Albania**

Article 3 of the Constitution of the Republic of Albania provides that “*human rights and freedoms constitute the fundamental principles this state is obliged to honor and protect*”. The principle of equality and non-discrimination is also reflected in Article 18 that provides among others that “everyone is equal before the Law. No one can be discriminated against on the grounds of gender, race, religion, ethnicity, language, philosophical or religious belief, economic, educational, social or family background. No one can be discriminated against on the grounds mentioned in the above paragraph if there are no legal, reasonable and objective grounds.” The Constitution of Albania addresses the concept of equality, yet it does not spell out anything with regard to the gender aspect, by mostly using gender-neutral pronouns such as everyone, every person, and so on. The only provision with a gender-specific dimension is Article 54/1, that inter stipulates: “children, youngsters, pregnant women and young mothers are entitled to special protection from the state”. Yet this provision only discusses social equality and positive discrimination. It does not spell out anything regarding the political dimension, decision-making and equal gender representation in this field. The language used in the constitution is widely neutral, mostly referring to neutral pronouns as anybody, every person, etc. The constitutional amendments of July 2016 through Law 76/2016, that affected, amongst others, also several articles of Chapter II of the Constitution on issues related to the election of the members of the Parliament did not mention, in any way, gender equality in relation to the electoral competition, by thus allowing for a gap as far as the principle of gender equality is concerned.

- **International conventions related to gender representation**

The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (**CEDAW**) is the most important document at the global level, which was ratified by Albania in 1993 through Law No. 1796 dated 9.11.1993. This convention obliges the State Parties to take political, legal and social measures to against the inferiority or superiority of either gender in all fields of life by also harmonizing women's political rights into a normative framework of nondiscrimination and equality. Article 7 of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, entitled “Women's participation in decision-making” provides inter-alia that States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies. Albania ratified the **Optional Protocol of the CEDAW** through Law 9052 dated 17.4.2003. The protocol sanctions individual rights of reporting and complaining to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women about violations of the Convention. The European Convention on Fundamental Human Rights and Freedoms was ratified by Albania through Law no. 8137, dated 31.07.1996 “On the **ratification of the European Convention on Fundamental Human Rights and Freedoms**”. Article 14 of this convention on the prohibition of discrimination provides that the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or another status. This provision indirectly addresses gender equality in the domain of political representation.

- **Law on gender equality in Albania and its impact**

This law regulates fundamental issues of gender equality in public life, the protection and equal treatment of women and men with regards to equal chances and opportunities for the exercise of their rights, as well as their participation and contribution in the advancement of all social spheres.

Article 7 of the law “On gender equality in the society”, provides for the necessary measures to be taken by the state institutions for the purpose of eliminating gender-based discrimination. As to enabling for an equal gender representation, Article 8 spells out several temporary/provisional measures, including the quota for reaching equal gender representation, increasing the participation of the less represented gender to decision-making and public life, empowering persons of each gender both economically and in terms of their status, equally improving their education level, as well as additional measures in every field, where persons of one gender do not enjoy an equal status with that of the persons of the other sex. Point 2 of Article

Article 15, of Law 9970, dated 24.08.2008 “On gender equality in the society” enables for the application of the *gender quota as a special temporary measure aimed at making the implementation of gender quota a reality*. It lays out, inter alia, the following: *Equal gender participation and representation in all legislative, executive, judicial power bodies as well as in other public institutions shall be achieved when:*

- a) A representation of above 30% of both sexes, including their steering bodies, is ensured;
- b) Equal observation of competition procedures and criteria for both genders for the assignments in these bodies is ensured;
- c) A participation of above 30% of both sexes in the list of candidates for the local government elections is ensured.
- ç. A participation of not less than 30% of each sex in the candidates' list presented by the political parties for the proportional system for the General Assembly elections is ensured.
- d) A participation of above 30% of each sex in the central and local elections process administration bodies is ensured

With reference to the most recent changes in the Electoral Code of Albania, it should be noted that the 30% quota envisaged in Law 9970, dated 24.08.2008 “On gender equality in the society” has been by now overtaken by higher quotas applied in local elections *sanctioning a 50% quota for all political races or for all public and political decision making should be included in this law.*

- **The gender dimension of the anti-discrimination law**

Law no. 221/4.2.2010 “On Protection from Discrimination” as adopted by the Albanian parliament is a significant step forward for the protection of equality and non-discrimination in Albania.

Article 9 of this law prohibits discrimination in the exercise of the right to vote, to be elected and to be appointed to a public duty for the causes mentioned in Article. This provision is a strong legal safeguard for gender equality creating the preconditions for other sublegal acts to reinforce gender equality in practical terms. A novelty brought forth by this law is the establishment of the *Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination*, an independent institution that assures the effective protection from discrimination and from every other form of conduct that incites discrimination. It is clear that gender equality and non-discrimination in the field of political decision-making falls within this remit.

Article 32 of the law provides that the commissioner has the competence to examine complaints from persons or groups of persons who claim that they have been discriminated against as provided in this law, to examine complaints from organizations that have a lawful interest to act in the name and with the written consent of individuals or groups of individuals who claim that discrimination has occurred and to perform administrative investigations after the receipt 105 of credible information about a violation of this law. The law also enables the commissioner to impose administrative sanctions according to the specification of this law. This competence greatly increases the authority of the commissioner to ensure proper implementation of the anti-discrimination law.

The law also enables the Commissioner to decide on administrative sanctions in case it notices that there discriminatory arrangements of any nature, which greatly improves the capacities of this institution in relation to the effective enforcement of the anti-discrimination law Based on Article 32, the commissioner is entitled to make recommendations to the competent authorities, especially by proposing the approval of new legislation or the amendment or reform of existing legislation, to contribute to reporting and, as the case may be, to submit reports to international and regional bodies, to represent a complainant in the judicial organs in civil cases, with his approval.

- **The electoral code from the gender perspective**

Article 67, points 6 and 7 of the Electoral Code on the list of candidates of parties and party coalitions provide, among other, that for *each electoral zone, at least thirty percent of the multi-name list and one of the first three names on the multi-name list shall belong to each gender*

Furthermore, for elections for local government bodies, for each municipal council, one in every two consecutive names in ranking shall belong to the same gender. In case of non-compliance with any of the conditions provided for in this article related to the composition of the multi-name list, the CEC can impose sanctions.

The above provisions point to two separate legal standards on gender equality. For parliamentary elections, the quota is set at 30%, whilst for local elections, the quota is set at 50%. It should be noted that these quotas apply only in relation to participation in the elections through a political competition, but they do not necessarily imply a real guarantee for the presence of a certain percentage of women elected in decision-making bodies. **This makes the application of quotas on the candidates' list a formality.** Also, the sanctions applied in case these quotas were not upheld have been often modest, and the political parties have chosen to rather pay the fines rather than to comply with the quota.

There is consensus among the members of parliament that regardless of the obligation stipulated by the Code to introduce a 30% quota on the number of MPs elected in every region, the political parties took advantage from the fact that the candidates' lists are closed and placed their women candidates at the bottom of the list, with minimum chances to be elected.

- **The law on political parties from the gender perspective**

Although this law covers a number of detailed issues on party financing by laying out the main principles that regulate the establishment of a political entity under the law, it still lacks clarity and substance over the content of political gender equality. The law in force is not yet harmonized with the other laws which regulate this area.

Sharing norms and principles of gender representation in the governing structures of political parties constitutes a step that is more solid and sustainable than the periodic electoral rules in terms of regulating an equal gender representation. Internal quotas and proportional representation create a new political culture within the parties; they widen the opportunities to adopt new approaches to gender issues, oblige parties to be more competitive in relation to voters of both sexes, create safeguards expressed through political programs that are legally anchored, and ultimately increase the quality of political representation for both sexes.

- **In 2015, women comprised 34.80 percent** (555 out of 1595) of local council seats (Central Election Commission, 2015). This result constitutes a divergence from the past.
- **In the local elections of 2007 and 2011, women comprised 10 percent and 12.2 percent of council seats**, respectively (Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, 2011). The percentage of women in local councils has increased almost threefold. But what difference will women's numbers make in local councils?

- **Law on decriminalization**

Decriminalization was high in the agenda of the political debate in 2016 and 2017, in relation to a process that was expected to remove from the political and official positions all persons with criminal records inside and outside of Albania. The first year of the implementation of the law (March 2016 – March 2017) resulted in 62 resignations, dismissals or investigations that affected only 5 women, politicians/female directors. None of these women was accused of criminal deeds. They had to resign because of their failure to submit on time their decriminalization forms, or because of their failure to fill them out properly. On the other hand, several male politicians and male MPs were affected by the decriminalization process (three MPs resigned, three MPs were dismissed, and 6 MPs are under investigation) and 25 other male politicians were discharged, most of them because of their criminal records.

Other important legal framework components:

- **“Labour Code of the Republic of Albania”**

It is the legal obligation of the employer to provide suitable workplace conditions for pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers who decide to return to work 63 days upon giving birth. These women benefit *from a paid break from work of two hours within the normal working hours* or they can work *two hours less for the same amount of payment*.

Additional guarantees to ensure the *return of a woman to her workplace upon the conclusion of her maternity leave. Equal pay for all employees regardless of their gender and sexual orientation.*

- **Economic empowerment**

In relation to women's economic empowerment, the Council of Ministers' has passed CoMD No. 375 dated 11.06. 2014 “On changes and amendment to Decision No. 904” providing *female spouses with the right to receive the economic aid*, as many cases had shown that economic aid was misused when only male spouses were entitled to receiving it.

Another positive act is CoMD No. 339, dated 19.06.2014 “*Action plan to support women entrepreneurs 2014-2020*”, CoMD No. 592 dated 10.09.2014 on the *establishment of the fund to support women entrepreneurs*. The aim of this fund is to provide for *direct financing to women entrepreneurs from non-banking institutions*. The fund covers up to *50% of the interest of the credit*. Decision No. 4/2014 “On the procedures for the administration of the fund for agriculture and rural development” lays out *the bonus system and the competitive criteria for farmers benefiting from the fund*. It stipulates for a *bonus of 5 points in the evaluation of the applications if the applicants are farmer women*.

Social and cultural considerations related to gender and political participation/empowerment

- Considering the *patriarchal tradition* and the *fragility of the democratization process*, gender equality in politics and in decision-making is to be considered as an indicator of a *particularly high importance for measuring the quality of Albania's democracy*.
- Improvements were made in 2017. The parties, especially those with *lesser chances to win, were more open towards promoting women and girls in elections*.
- Equal chances for high-level careers for women are also limited due to beliefs by parties *that tough political challenges and competition faced in local and central elections can only be handled by men*
- *Urban-rural/south-north gap*: According to political representatives of right wing in most of the suburban areas, "8 out of 10 persons engaging with politics are men, youth forums excluded. Our society is more prone to authoritarianism because of our totalitarian legacy.
We've observed internal differences between the north and the south such as: in northern municipalities small parties have started their lists with men; while in the southern municipalities it is found (in many cases) that their lists started with women. In southern municipalities it is found that the third political force in the country (LSI), its lists started with woman, which is not the case for northern municipalities. In Northern Albania, we still have traditional voting structures based on the tribe's lines; i.e. the tribe vote for a small party, while in South, the dominance of the two main parties is stronger and more consolidated.
- The full implementation of the *decriminalization law ought to contribute* towards creating a positive environment that is conducive to an increased participation of women in political parties and in the parliament. *No women at the central or local level had to give up their mandates as a consequence of the application of the decriminalization provisions* regarding their criminal past.
- *Inflammatory rhetoric and conflict-laden politics* are two further factors as a formidable barrier to higher standards of equal representation. They demotivate women's political careers and create an overall environment that is not conducive to women politicians. Over the last parliamentary session, no woman MP was ever penalized because of the language used in the parliament, whilst the number of the penalties applied to male MPs goes up to twenty. This clearly shows a significant difference in ethical behavior in the parliament between male and female MPs.
- Media plays a fundamental role in the promotion of equal political representation. It does so by publicly promoting positive models of women in politics. According to ODIHR, women candidates received less media attention, and public and private TV channels monitored by the ODIHR Elections Monitoring *Mission only dedicated 13% of their total campaign coverage to women*. Significant effort needs to be made in this regard, in cooperation with women politicians and their representative and organizational structures. *Sexism* dominates the TV screens. Women are *attacked much more than men on account of their personal life*, the toughness of the political narrative of party leadership forces women either to conform themselves to that narrative or to refrain from engaging in the public discourse. In fact, the *language used by the media is only a reflection of the daily discourse*, conditioned by the culture and by the society.
- The *"queen mother" phenomenon*, according to which leading women in the party become themselves barriers to the inclusion of more women into the structures, was confirmed by most of the experts participating in the focus groups. This phenomenon is related to the attempt of influential political women to jealously guard their spheres of influence, to their own inferiority complexes, to personal frustration and so on. There exists the perception according to which *men are more capable of establishing alliances and of supporting each-other than women*, and that there is a greater sense of solidarity between men than between women
- Women candidates do not *contribute financially for the party during elections*, in contrary, they ask for funding from the party, which is not what the parties look for

Table 13. Data on numbers and percentage of women MPs, 1991-2017

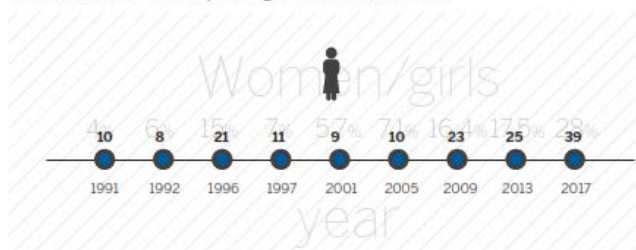


Table 18. Women ministers from 1991 to 2017

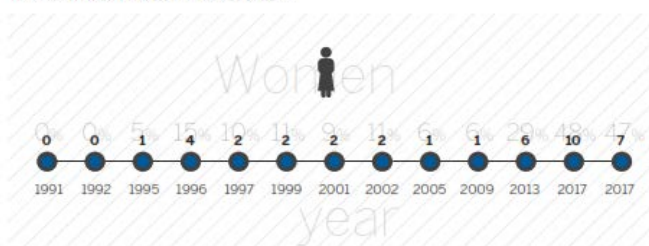


Table 17. Data on representation of women in the elections of 2011 and 2015

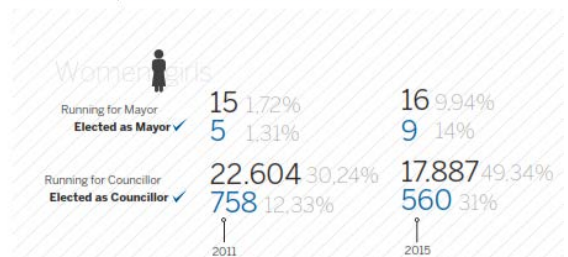
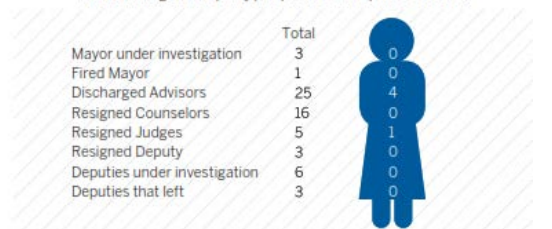


Table 20. Data on the dismissals of public officials owing to the decriminalisation law, seen from the gender equality perspective for the period 2016-2017

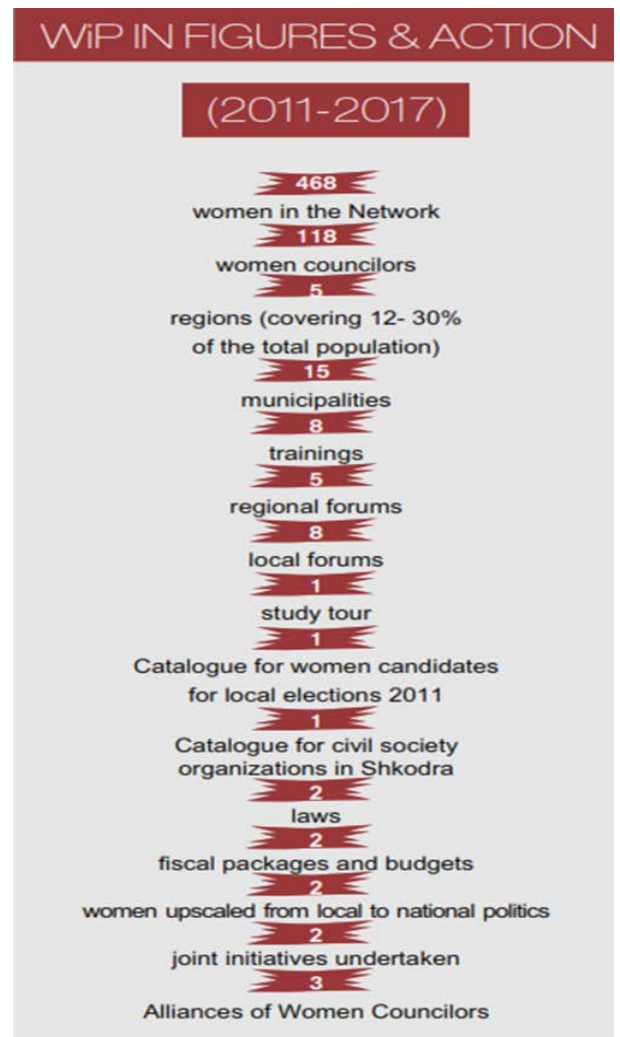


Key constraints and risks for women's political empowerment and leadership identified and addressed by the project

1. Party leaders do not select women to promote gender equality and strengthen party democracy. Quite the contrary, they select women to preserve the status quo. Hence, the decision making of women might *reflect the interests of party leaders rather than community interests* (**response politics in action**)
2. Gender quotas also *decrease political opportunities for men*, which might lead to hostility and opposition, such as withholding information and ridiculing women during meetings (**response Regional & Local Forums with the participation on man and women on certain community issues**)
3. Women political participation has improved women's substantive representation as process (e.g., introducing bills that address women's issues, establishing connections with women's organizations, putting women's issues on committees' agenda), not outcome e.g., transforming political practices, enacting new policies (**response strengthen oversight functioning capacity and policy/advocacy skills**)
4. The labeling of "quota women" **creates double standards** because women, not men, must demonstrate that they are capable and challenge clientelism. This reinforces gender bias and also undermines women's ability to organize and affect change as a group. (**response networking and visibility**)
5. **Overall high expectations:** a critical mass of women will result into better representation of women's interests, improved communication and dialogue, increased opportunities for collaboration, greater engagement of women and girls in decision-making, and improved access to public goods and services, especially water and education. Furthermore, the increased presence of women will enhance accountability and transparency, strengthen local democracy, and promote gender equality. (**response coalition of donors on gender mainstreaming and leadership support as well as visibility of global indexes**)
6. The relationship between the **proportion of women in local councils and their perceived decision making power** was not positive at the beginning of quota application (**response regular capacity building and learning by doing**).



Gender workshop with Women in Politics Network, Montenegro, January 2011.

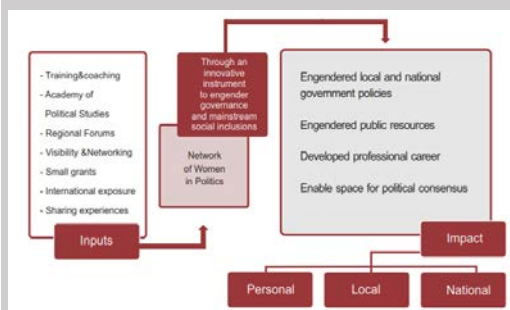


What are the key conclusions?

Key Good Practices

- I. **Networking:** Supported women members of the political forums to work together at local and national level in order to achieve the increase of the representation of women in politics. Show case be-partisan approach.
- II. **Politics in action:** translate the gained representative power through quota system into more roles for women in the public life of the cities.
- III. **Advocacy and policy:** Liaise civil society organizations that are focused in addressing various issues of women with women in politics for selected advocacy cases. Engender legal frame work
- IV. **Capacity building and expertise** such as local governance functioning, budgeting, social inclusion, etc: learning by doing Regional & Local Forums with the participation on man and women on certain community issues
- V. **International exposure, visibility** through Academy of Political Studies: promoting the development of a new generation of politicians and leaders as committed citizens for the implementation of the democratic model of governance and development. The cooperation with international organizations such as OSCE, NDI and UN Women, with whom the WiP network shared common values.

- *What strategies/interventions worked and how?*



Key Lessons Learned

Professional women might change working culture and mentality in rural areas
Working with institutions is multidimensional: motivate drivers of change – create enabling environment – liaise with citizens

Political parties as the carriers of the access to political power play a pivotal role in the political empowerment of women. The leaders of the political parties have the power to open windows of opportunities to women, by offering leading positions in the party or by setting up voluntary quotas aimed at an equal political representation. Parties may run programs to support candidates running for the first time and develop policies that advantage women candidates. After the elections, parties may provide support to elected women politicians, to further advance in their political careers

You need to understand the **hidden powers and actors**: the analysis of the results of 2015 local elections regarding the representation of women in local councils put some light on the process of lists compilation. In informal meetings, the dldp has learned that powerful businesses had influenced the inclusion of some names in the lists of candidates for councilors, using informal and short links with the head of the political parties. On the other hand, the Head of the parties have informally included in the lists wives of powerful men, without the consent of the structures. The advancement of the women's political representation requires synergy between the written rules and statutory norms, and the strong political will of the decision-makers within political parties. The gender gap is not just urban-versus-rural. It also consists of the ways parties approach their electoral campaigns, and their get out the vote efforts.

Quotas were considered by as a good instrument to overcome political and cultural barriers, and to create more trust in the democratically representative system. However, **local differences in the democratic development** between certain areas are a reasons for distortions in reporting achievements.

An evaluation on **decision making of women vs man in local councils** revealed a significant contribution of women in the following areas: women were more likely than men to *propose draft decisions that focus on improving women's status*; women have proposed draft decisions that *focus on parks, kindergartens, employment opportunities, economic aid, business support, support for women in rural areas, social housing, and leisure activities for women*; even though women were less likely than men to propose draft decisions, *their draft decisions were more diverse*; women have been *more responsive to health services, especially for women, business support for women, persons with disabilities, LGBT, and youth*; compared to men, *women were more likely to report better relationships with councilors* who shared the same gender and belonged to the opposition; women were more likely than men to report that they have *participated in collaborative initiatives addressing the problems faced by women and girls in the community*.

Women engage less than men: Men were also more likely to report that they meet with community members or they rely on community members for information. Women were more likely than men to rely on party leaders for information.

Women **reported better relationships in councils than men**. They were more likely than men to bridge their political party. Even though they reported that they have better relationships in the council, their good relationships did not always **translate into collaborative initiatives**.

There is evidence that party leaders take advantage of gender quotas to sustain their political power. Because gender quotas challenge the existing political power, the focus should be on how to **increase the bargaining power of women and their role within the party**.

Recommendations

- Excluding **professional women in rural areas**, where capacities are very limited, it's a "luxury" that local governance leadership cannot afford; therefore, development programmes should focus on the interface gender-rural in their intervention;
- To better address the current discrepancy between the many capacities of women and their actual low level of representation in political decision-making, we suggest **enhancing the representation of women horizontally and vertically in political parties, political institutions, and electoral processes**.
- Fair gender representation in the decision making structures of political parties is closely linked to their **internal democratization and the establishment of a meritocratic system in party structures**. It should be regulated by the law of political parties. Political parties should engage in a sustained manner with women by strengthening their women's organizations and institutionalizing joint sessions of parliamentary groups, municipal councils and the group of ministers with women's forums. Parties should create their specific electoral programs on gender issues and gender-discriminatory discourse cases should be addressed by provisions enumerated in their Codes of Ethics as flagrant violations sanctioned with career-related penalties
- **Solid data on women** are important for measuring results and steering development agendas (ex. Central Elections Commission (CEC) should establish an **accurate database** with the data of all electoral candidates, provide sex disaggregated data, and make this database available to the public and academia.)
- Women's organizations and political parties will need to cooperate closely with the media towards greater **media promotion of women's electoral campaigns** from each party, as well as promote positive **women's career models**. Good practices that have been able to sustain themselves so far, such as the Women's Alliance of MPs and the Alliances of Women Councilors should be encouraged to be more active, create debate forums and raise awareness on gender issues, including issues of political representation at all levels of government.
- Civil society, parties, and international partners should **regularly conduct media, legislative and political training programs** for women candidates and women in politics to help them get informed on current forms of communication and political activity (and not just before election): working on system and do it systematically.
- **Office for Gender Equality** to monitor the respective legal framework and its implementation are a good instrument to drive the expected change from policy achievements.

Results from perception surveys

Table 22: Which is in your opinion the best option to pass from the quotas at the candidate level to quotas at the representation level in parliamentary elections?

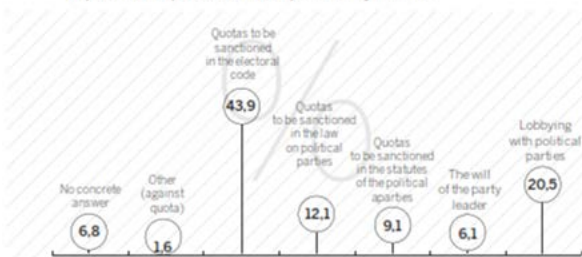
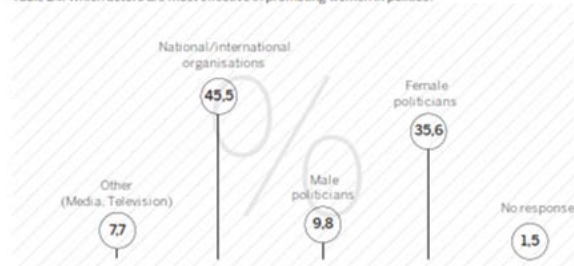
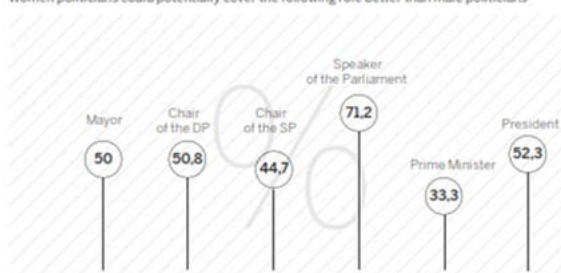


Table 24: Which actors are most effective in promoting women in politics?



Women politicians could potentially cover the following role better than male politicians



More information and resources

<https://www.helvetas.org/DIdp>

https://www.helvetas.org/Publications-PDFs/Eastern-Europe-Caucasus/Albania/Women_in_politics_capitalization_report.pdf

https://www.helvetas.org/Publications-PDFs/Eastern-Europe-Caucasus/Albania/one_network10.pdf

<https://www.undp.org/content/dam/albania/docs/ENGLISH.pdf>

<http://isp.com.al/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/STANDARDS-OF-REPRESENTATION-IN-POLITICAL-PARTIES.pdf>