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Towards SDG 16:

PROMOTING JUST, PEACEFUL AND INCLUSIVE
SOCIETIES IN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

3 INCLUSIVE POLITICAL PROCESSES

TOWARDS SDG 16:

Promoting Just, Peaceful and Inclusive Societies in Europe and Central Asia

INCLUSIVE POLITICAL PROCESSES

OVERVIEW

Establishing and strengthening inclusive political processes is a broad area of programming that aims to improve the participation and political influence of citizens, make governments and institutions more accountable, and build a stronger and more inclusive social contract. Given the diverse countries of the Europe and Commonwealth of Independent States (ECIS) region, this work often varies significantly depending on local needs and conditions, and as such, covers a wide range of activities:

- **Parliamentary Development** – building the capacities of Members of Parliament (MPs) and their Secretariats to discharge their constitutional, law-making, oversight and representation mandates, and the skills of civil society actors to act as intermediaries in political advocacy, representation and engagement in political processes.
- **Constitutional Reform Processes** – supporting dialogue and mediation, outreach, public education, and institutional development of constitution-making bodies.
- **The Electoral Cycle** – enhancing the credibility, transparency, effectiveness and sustainability of electoral institutions and processes.

- **Civic Engagement** – strengthening civil society capacities and expanding and protecting spaces for citizen participation in political and public life, with a special focus on groups experiencing discrimination and marginalization.
- **Women's Equal Political Participation** – advocating for and facilitating the involvement of women in political processes, from participation in electoral processes, to the promotion of women into important decision-making positions.

While the activities the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) undertakes will typically be targeted at one of the above areas, the interrelated nature of the work and UNDP's integrated approach to supporting inclusive political processes ensures all projects address most or all of these areas. These projects also aim to harness UNDP's experience and comparative advantage to ensure more effective, efficient and sustainable interventions.

KEY TRENDS

DIVERGING LEVELS OF VOICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The primary measures of the inclusiveness of political processes, access to fundamental freedoms, openness and accountability, are at the heart of UNDP's programming in this area. UNDP helps countries strengthen democratic processes, increase the political participation of women and other marginalized groups, improve accountability and representation through parliamentary reforms, and create legal frameworks for a fundamentally more open and inclusive society through constitutional reforms.

Although there is significant variation between countries, the levels of political freedom, openness, and accountability in the ECIS region in general remain notably behind the levels typically found in Western Europe. This discrepancy can be observed using the Voice and Accountability

UNDP's *Inclusive Political Processes* work is designed to help countries meet targets under:

5 GENDER EQUALITY



GOAL 5 – ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS:

- End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere
- Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life
- Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels

16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

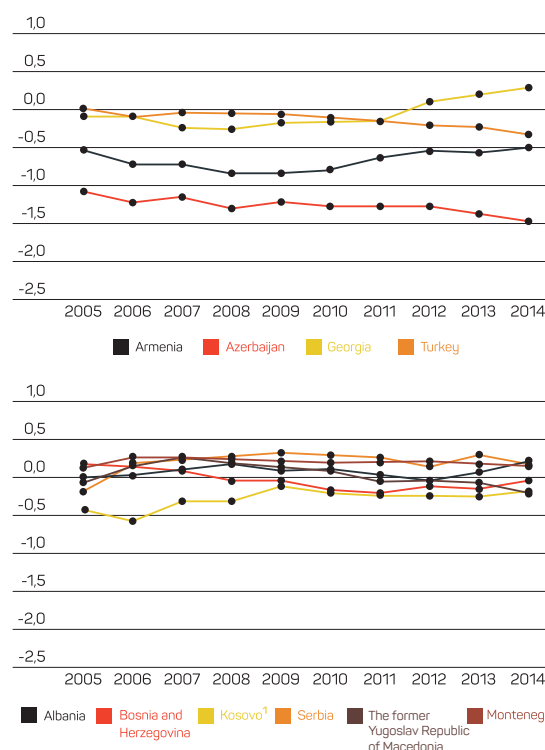


GOAL 16 – PROMOTE JUST, PEACEFUL AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES:

- Ensuring responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels
- By 2030, providing legal identity for all, including birth registration
- Ensuring public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements

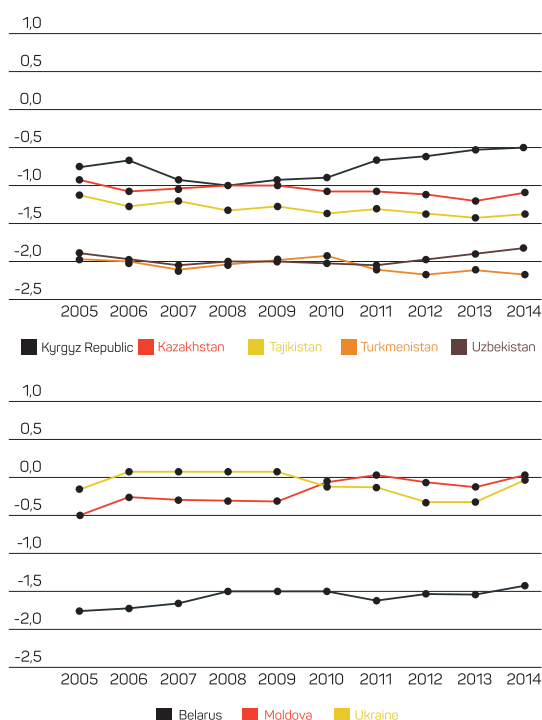
Worldwide Governance Indicator, which captures citizens' perceptions of their ability to participate in selecting their government, as well as their perceived level of freedom of expression, freedom of association, and a free media.

Despite this, the region overall has seen an improvement in this particular measure. This positive trend is also expected to continue with extensive reforms processes underway in countries such as Kazakhstan and Ukraine.



society organization, increase requirements to report international funding sources, and require the printing of 'foreign agent' on materials produced by the organization if it receives above a threshold level of foreign funding.

In contrast, in some other countries, political activism and mass protests provide evidence for a level of civil society organizational effectiveness, as well as a level of civic engagement that can be channelled, through organizations, to more pro-



Source: Worldwide Governance Indicators, The World Bank²

The divergence in voice and accountability can also be seen in the civil society space. For many countries in the ECIS region, the political and regulatory environment remains difficult for civil society, and in several countries, it is becoming increasingly hostile. This growing hostility, often a result of attempts to restrict the funding of perceived terrorist and extremist groups, can be seen in the legislation being considered and passed in several countries in the region. Although the proposed restrictions vary from country to country, they typically include measures that make it more difficult to establish a civil

ductive ends. This effect could be seen particularly in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, where mass protests in response to revelations of high level corruption in the Government have allowed civil society to lift political engagement among youth, and to unite people from different ethnic groups. Similarly, mass protests in Kosovo, Ukraine, Armenia and Moldova have demonstrated space for civic engagement by organizations and groups representing a clear demand for change.

¹ All references to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

² The World Bank, "Worldwide Governance Indicators".

Available from <http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/worldwide-governance-indicators> (accessed 17 June 2016)

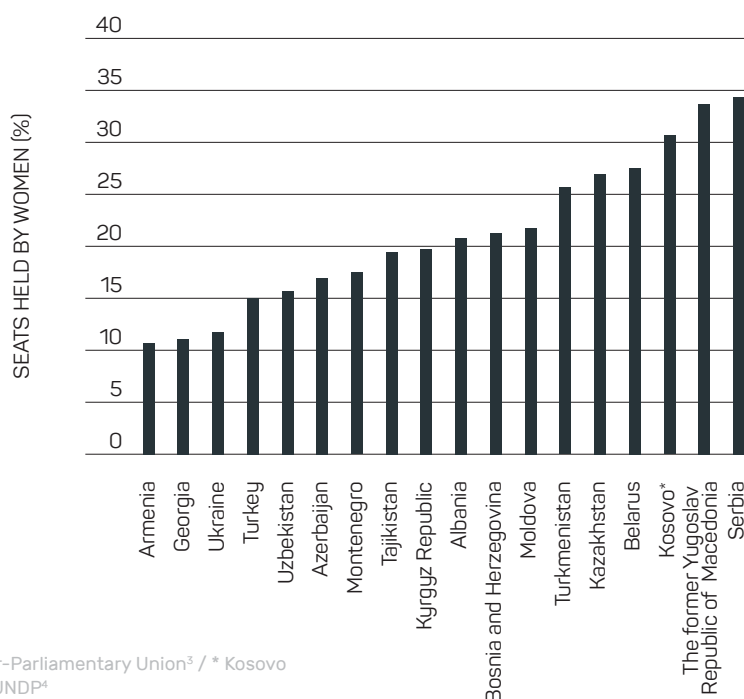
THE GROWING PRESENCE OF WOMEN IN DECISION-MAKING ROLES

Due to the centrally planned heritage of almost all countries in the ECIS region, the expectation that women will have an active role in the labour force is arguably more accepted than in other lower and middle income countries around the world. This is reflected by UNDP's Gender Development Index, a measure of gender equality, which shows several countries in the region, particularly in the Western CIS, have very high gender equality (higher than the OECD average). That said, several others, such as Turkey and several of the Central Asian nations, lag behind significantly.

Despite generally high levels of women in the workforce and gender equality, women across most of the region continue to be discriminated against in a number of ways, including by being at a higher risk of being subjected to violence and being denied access to positions of power and/or leadership, through both active and passive discrimination. Furthermore, there have been decreases in women's participation in the labour force in several countries, suggesting that gender inclusion inherited from former centrally planned regimes is being lost in some places.

A primary indicator of the level of gender equality is the level of access that women have to positions of leadership and influence. While having women in leadership positions, particularly in parliaments, is a worthy goal in itself, it is also vitally important for ensuring the sustainability of gains and for building momentum for future reforms. By normalizing the presence of women in decision-making and leadership positions, the risk of backsliding greatly diminishes, and remaining barriers to equality are likely to fall more rapidly.

In the ECIS region, significant efforts on the part of UNDP and other organizations have led to notable improvements in the number of women in parliament, particularly in the Western Balkans. However, much remains to be done in the ECIS region to improve on relatively low percentages of women in parliament. In Azerbaijan, women only make up 16.9 percent of parliamentary members and this represents the highest level of representation in the Caucasus region. Moreover, even in the countries and territories with higher percentages of female parliamentarians, the number of women in ministerial and leadership positions remains low.



Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union³ / * Kosovo figure from UNDP⁴

³ Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Women in national parliaments". Available from <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm> (accessed 26 August 2016)

⁴ UNDP in Kosovo, "About Kosovo". Available from <http://www.ks.undp.org/content/kosovo/en/home/countryinfo.html> (accessed 23 June 2016)

WHAT WE DO

PARLIAMENTARY DEVELOPMENT

Effective political institutions, such as parliaments and political parties, are central to advancing strong systems of democratic governance. Parliaments have crucial constitutional mandates in relation to law-making, oversight and representation, and also play a critical role in advancing sustainable development. They provide an important forum for diverse societal groups (including women and minority groups) to engage in policymaking, express their views, voice concerns and demand accountability. Given the importance of parliaments to a functioning democracy, UNDP works in a number of ways to support parliaments throughout the ECIS region.

Often this assistance takes the form of supporting efforts to reform and improve the functioning of parliaments, making them more representative, open, and accountable. In Moldova, for example, UNDP supported the Parliament in conducting an institutional corruption self-assessment and in developing an Anti-Corruption Action Plan and Code of Conduct for MPs. In Serbia, significant work was also undertaken to increase the openness of the political process, including through the launch of a portal that enables MPs to monitor public budget expenditures electronically, and the introduction of public hearings and mobile committee sessions. The success of this work has been recognized by national partners in Serbia as one of the most effective ways to improve transparency and promote public participation in decision-making.

These reform efforts are often coupled with efforts to provide training and capacity building activities for parliamentarians and their secretariats. In Moldova, UNDP supported training for parliamentarians and their staff on proper legislative scrutiny, with a focus on identifying gender equality and conformity with international human rights obligations. In Kosovo, training on research and data collection was provided to the support staff of 12 Parliamentary Committees, and supplemented with an exchange of experience with the Czech Parliament. This was complemented by the drafting and finalization of Strategy 2016-2020 for the Assembly of Kosovo.

Combining both these elements, UNDP's work in Georgia has been one of its biggest parliamentary development initiatives. At the strategic level, UNDP has been actively supporting and facilitating the development of an Open Parliament Action Plan, within the Open Government Partnership (OGP) process, through a consultative process involving civil society organizations. The plan includes a number of positive steps, including a commitment to promote public involvement in the legislative process, and the establishment of a permanent Parliamentary Council on Open and Transparent Governance. In more practical terms, the adoption of the action plan is already impacting on the Parliament's policymaking and oversight capacities through intensive capacity building activities, including trainings, coaching and study visits. Moreover, successful implementation by the sectoral committees of their action plans has facilitated a structured approach to committee work and assisted in effective and efficient performance of their legislative, oversight and representative functions. For example, the Human Rights Committee organized open hearings on the implementation of the Public Defender's recommendations to the Executive, which were for the first time attended by top management including Ministers and Deputy Ministers. The Agrarian Issues Committee activated its public outreach and engaged different groups of citizens, such as farmers, to inform the law-making process. Budgetary oversight functions of the Healthcare Committee have increased through considering reports of State Audit Office and strengthening cooperation with different government agencies and civil society organizations.

The success of the process to develop an Open Parliament Action Plan in Georgia has also inspired Ukraine to start a process to develop a parliamentary openness action plan.

Photo by: Open Government Partnership @ Twitter



Georgia wins the first OGP Government Champions Award

Highlights



An Anti-Corruption Action Plan and Code of Conduct for MPs developed by the Moldovan Parliament.



As an acknowledgement of its commitment to openness and effective cooperation with civil society, the Georgian Parliament was awarded the global OGP Government Champions Award in October 2015.



The success of the process to develop a Parliamentary Openness action plan in Georgia has convinced Ukraine to begin a similar process.

CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

A constitution provides the overarching legal framework of a country and sets out the basis of the social contract between a state and its people, affecting all aspects of policy and society. It establishes the institutions of government and their powers, and provides the foundations on which governance and peace are built. Therefore, it is essential that all segments of society feel that the constitution is not only legitimate, but represents their interests and protects their rights.

Historically, constitutions were often drafted behind closed doors, on the basis of negotiations between powerbrokers. However, in recent decades, there has been an important shift towards participatory, inclusive and transparent constitutional reform processes, which build consensus around the shared vision to be enshrined in the national constitution. Recognising the centrality of national constitutions to UNDP's work, the UNDP Strategic Plan 2014-17 explicitly includes constitution-making assistance as a key component of UNDP's support for inclusive governance, peacebuilding and sustainable development.

In support of national constitutional reform efforts, UNDP provides support throughout the ECIS region to design and manage inclusive constitutional reform processes. This support includes facilitating the establishment of constitution-making bodies, and providing technical training and advisory services. As part of this process, UNDP often facili-

tates the provision of high quality technical advice on substantive constitution issues, such as power-sharing, federalism/decentralization, human rights, gender equality and public accountability. Additionally, with the focus on these constitutional reform processes being participatory, UNDP works with civil society organizations and the public more broadly to ensure they can make meaningful contributions. This includes civic education and public consultation programmes, civil society advocacy and capacity development, and the engagement of women, youth and marginalized groups.

In Turkmenistan, UNDP assisted the Turkmen Government with a constitutional review by engaging international experts to provide information and guidance on the best practices of constitutional democracies. This expert assistance allowed the Turkmen Government to conduct an effective review of the existing constitution, which in turn fed into the drafting of a new constitution. The new draft constitution was then published in the national newspaper to ensure transparency and encourage public discussion. In the Kyrgyz Republic, UNDP supported the operationalization of the Constitutional Chamber, while in Ukraine, UNDP supported various aspects of the ongoing constitutional amendment and reform process.

ELECTORAL CYCLE SUPPORT

Free and fair elections are a vital precondition for democratic governance, with the integrity and credibility of election processes, in many ways,

Highlights



Assisted the Government of Turkmenistan with a constitutional review process, engaging international experts to provide advice and guidance, leading to the production of a new draft constitution.

more important than the actual result. While credible elections can facilitate smooth transitions of power and reduce the risk of conflict and violence, poorly run, unfair or otherwise tainted elections can undermine the political system, or worse still, serve as a flashpoint, triggering violence and conflict.

In the ECIS region, many countries continue to face challenges related to electoral cycle processes. These challenges vary across the region, but relate to all aspects of the electoral cycle including civic education, voter registration, boundary delimitation, polling and tabulation of results, electoral laws and campaign regulations, and the exclusion of marginalized groups. In addition, Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) are often poorly equipped to address all or any of these issues.

UNDP promotes credible and inclusive elections at all levels by supporting national and territorial efforts to promote legal reform; helping to establish independent management bodies; implementing systems of planning, monitoring, and budgeting; improving voter and civic education; promoting the participation of women as voters, candidates and employees within EMBs; encouraging the political participation of vulnerable and marginalized groups; and preventing electoral conflict and violence.

UNDP's assistance with parliamentary elections in the Kyrgyz Republic in 2015 provides an insight into this approach. With the introduction of a new biometrics based voter identification system, UNDP worked with EMBs to ensure the system functioned effectively, guaranteeing that the people of the Kyrgyz Republic could exercise their right to vote. UNDP also worked to increase the inclusiveness of the election process through voter education and outreach campaigns, with specific activities organized

to engage women and youth. In total, approximately 40,000 people were engaged as a result of these activities, which also resulted in the establishment of a gender rating for the political parties, allowing voters to make a more informed choice.

UNDP also supports electoral administration of local elections. In Albania, for example, leading into the local elections of June 2015, UNDP assisted the Central Election Commission in electoral administration. Focus group discussions identified key voter education issues in the context of territorial reform and amalgamation. In Moldova, the Central Electoral Commission upgraded the e-Elections system to collect and produce multi-dimensional sex-disaggregated data, and strengthened the inclusiveness of electoral processes. UNDP reached more than 20,000 people from 35 district centres with voter education campaigns, including 1,000 young voters and over 7,000 Roma women and men, which resulted in a 60 percent turnout among Roma people at the 2015 elections, compared to the previous 20-25 percent.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Civic engagement is the process through which members of society engage in individual and collective actions aimed at influencing public processes. Opening up political processes, as well as encouraging all of society to participate, allows for grievances to be aired, issues to be identified and addressed, and the risk of conflict and violence to be diminished.

UNDP attaches critical importance to the promotion of civic engagement. At the strategic level, UNDP often promotes normative and regulatory frameworks which are conducive to civic engagement and supportive of the important role to be played by citizens, communities, and

civil society organizations. In Moldova, UNDP supported the holding of public parliamentary hearings, something that became standard practice in 2016. The Moldovan Parliament is now publicly broadcasting all sessions and some Committee meetings.

A key aspect of UNDP's work to increase civic engagement is its support in establishing and maintaining meaningful dialogue and platforms. In Uzbekistan, UNDP achieved a significant increase in the public's engagement with the legislative process through the launch, promotion, and enhancement of a public consultations platform, provided in both Uzbek and Russian. By the end of

UNDP also promotes the full and meaningful participation in political and public life of groups experiencing significant exclusion, including religious and ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) community. In Moldova, UNDP provided training to minority candidates and supported voter outreach campaigns, resulting in the election of two Roma women as local councilors for the first time. Moreover, the campaigns of Roma candidates, in combination with the voter education campaigns, saw huge increases in voter turnout amongst Roma, including a 98 percent turnout rate in Chetrosu. In Armenia, UNDP supported the increased inclusion of people with disabilities in the political process by facilitating discussions between 280 people in 11 communities (130 of which were people with disabilities) and their respective local government representatives.

Civil society is a key player in efforts to ensure civic engagement. For this reason, UNDP collaborates with and seeks to advance the capacities of all forms of civil society, including social movements, volunteer organizations, membership organizations, NGOs, and community-based organizations. In 2015, UNDP in Azerbaijan supported civil society organizations working on democracy and human rights under the framework of the Eastern Partnership. Similar work was also undertaken in Turkey, where UNDP worked to enhance the ability of civil society to support the effective implementation of gender related policies at the local level.

The 'Let's Vote' campaign promoting more informed voting within Roma communities in Moldova



Photo by: UNDP Eurasia

2015, almost 300 draft laws and regulations had been put on the platform and over 500 comments and proposals on the draft laws received from citizens and experts. Similar work was also carried out in Belarus, with the introduction of an innovative prototype public e-feedback mechanism.

Highlights



Worked with EMBs in the Kyrgyz Republic to ensure effective functioning of new biometrics based voter identification system.



Established a gender rating for each political party in the Kyrgyz parliamentary elections.

Highlights



Boosted public engagement with the legislative process in Uzbekistan through the launch, promotion and enhancement of a public consultations platform, provided in both Uzbek and Russian.



Provided training and supported voter outreach campaigns in Moldova, resulting in the election of two Roma women as local councillors for the first time ever and large increases in voter turnout in Roma communities.



Support provided to civil society organizations working on democracy and human rights in Azerbaijan in the face of increasing restrictions

WOMEN'S EQUAL POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Ensuring the ability of women to participate equally in governance processes and decision-making is vital for achieving inclusive and effective governance. With women's equal political participation being a precursor for achieving equality more broadly, this is viewed as one of the primary challenges facing the region as a whole.

Accordingly, a key pillar of UNDP's inclusive political processes programming is advocating for women's political rights, improving policy formulation and supporting countries to implement international, regional and national commitments on women's participation in decision-making. This is in line with UNDP's broader strategic direction, as outlined in the UNDP Strategic Plan and the Gender Equality Strategy 2014-17, both of which prioritize women's participation in decision-making and leadership.

UNDP aims to improve women's participation by encouraging women to become more politically active, both as voters and candidates, through candidate training and awareness campaigns. In Armenia, UNDP supported women's political participation at the local level by implement-

ing capacity development programmes for 490 women. As a result, 20 women ran for election in 37 communities, with 19 being elected. To enlarge the pool of women running for seats in the local elections in 2016, an additional 204 women were trained on leadership, community development, local governance, gender equality and participatory democracy. Similarly, in Moldova, UNDP provided robust capacity development support to 21 newly elected women parliamentarians and over 100 women local councillors at first mandate on inclusive governance, gender-responsive policy making and budgeting, public communications and media skills, partnership building, and fundraising.

UNDP also undertakes efforts to reform political institutions to ensure more women are employed and are promoted into decision-making positions. The institutions targeted often include EMBs, candidate lists, and parliaments, while the reform efforts often include the introduction of gender quotas, a useful tool for normalizing the presence of women in positions of authority. In Albania, UNDP facilitated the passing of a 50 percent women's quota for the candidates in the June 2015 local elections. The end result was a milestone achievement, with women being elected in approximately 35 percent of contests. In the former Yugoslav

Republic of Macedonia, UNDP advocacy also helped to secure an increase in the candidate list quotas for women. As a result, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is likely to have one of the highest shares of female representation in parliament in the world after the next elections.

Strong, effective networks are often one of the keys to success for politicians, as they can provide advice, fundraising, and promotion possibilities. For female politicians, it is often the lack of effective networks that serves as one of the major impediments to progressing political careers. As such, another important aspect of UNDP's programming is the promotion of coal-

tion building and networking among women representatives and decision makers to strengthen women's influence across the decision-making chain. An example of this type of work is seen in Moldova where UNDP supported the establishment of a cross-party Women Caucus in the Parliament and a gender audit of the Parliament. The benefits of this were seen almost immediately as the Caucus engaged with five regional policy forums, meeting with women representing grass-roots organizations and vulnerable groups to discuss a policy and reform agenda.



Attendees at the 2-day 'Gender and Elections' seminar in Tirana discussing the challenges facing women and girls during elections

Photo by: UNDP Albania

Highlights



Implemented a capacity development programme for 490 women in Armenia, resulting in 19 being elected to local councils in 37 communities.



Helped to secure an increase in the candidate list quotas for women from 32.5 percent to 40 percent in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, which as a result is likely to have one of the highest shares of female representation in the world after the next elections.



Helped to establish a cross-party Women Caucus in the Moldovan Parliament, which immediately engaged with five regional policy forums to discuss a policy and reform agenda, and completed a gender audit of the parliament.

WOMEN IN DECISION-MAKING - INCREASING THE PROPORTION OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS

Women's equal representation in elected institutions is key to the legitimacy of parliaments and assemblies. Yet across the ECIS region, women's representation remains at 17.7 percent, below the global average of 22.5 percent.⁵ Figures at the local and municipal level are lower still, with women representing just 15 percent of mayors or heads of municipal councils.⁶ Although elected positions are open to women, established structures and strategic plans are needed to improve women's political participation and attain gender equality.

While the region has made progress towards gender equality in political participation, achieving a gender balance of elected representatives requires concerted effort. UNDP is focused on equal participation and empowerment of women as elected representatives, which involves the proportion of female representatives in parliament, as well as fostering the empowerment and substantive representation of women, particularly in increasing participation in decision-making bodies and developing the capacities of women as elected representatives.

By furthering gender balance in parliamentary representation, legislative programming aims to support the empowerment of women in political decision-making and foster the adoption of specific gender equality frameworks, while progressively mainstreaming a gender-based approach in all policymaking. This includes gender-sensitive rules and procedures in parliament covering institutional procedures, as well as formal and informal parliamentary practices, which contribute to the creation of 'gender-sensitive parliaments', and it includes the discussion of the groups and that facilitate said practices.

Another key aim is the adoption of legal frameworks for promoting gender equality in society which includes dedicated gender equality laws and policies, gender-sensitive and inclusive national development, and establishing and monitoring the implementation of legislative frameworks for gender equality.

To improve gender equality in political representation and policymaking, UNDP programming aims to increase women's participation in elected office at all levels of leadership. In the past decade, parliamentary and party gender quotas and the strengthening of capacity building of parliamentarians has improved substantially.

For example:

In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, with UNDP support, the Macedonian Women's Lobby collaborated with members of the Women Parliamentarians' Club to increase the gender quota applicable to political party candidate lists from 32.5 percent to 40 percent. This quota was incorporated into the new electoral code, further securing representation of women at both the central and local level.

In Ukraine, UNDP support for legislative drafting and advocacy resulted in the 2014 amendments to the Law on Local Elections, requiring a minimum of 30 representatives of each gender on candidate lists for local elections. This quota was applied during the October 2015 local elections. For the most part, political parties complied with the quotas for the oblast and city council candidate lists - women's presence on candidate lists increased to 29.6 percent for oblasts and to 32.1 percent for city councils. Following the elections, this translated into an increase in representation from 10 to 15 percent in oblasts, and from 14 to 18 percent in city councils. Importantly, the introduction of the quota also contributed to the opening of public debate of women's political participation.

In Kazakhstan, in collaboration with UN Women, UNDP organized a roundtable on gender quotas featuring representatives of both the Parliament and civil society. Participants discussed different quota systems, agreeing on a system of minimum representation on candidate lists as more effective. The event provided the opportunity for gender activists at parliamentary and civil society level to discuss this issue on an equal basis, and demonstrated a growing solidarity on gender equality within the Parliament itself.

⁵ Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), *Women in National Parliaments*, data as of November 11, 2015. <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>

⁶ European Commission, DG Justice, "Women and men in decision making", available at: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/gender-decision-making/database/politics/municipal-councils/index_en.htm. The database calculates the number and percentage of women and men in the lowest levels of sub-national, elected administrative office in 34 European countries (EU-28 plus Iceland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia and Turkey).

