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# WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP AS A ROUTE TO GREATER EMPOWERMENT

MEXICO CASE STUDY

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## MEXICO CASE STUDY



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## ACRONYMS

CDI	Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas / National Commission for Development of Indigenous Peoples
CEAMEG	Centro de Estudios para el Adelanto de las Mujeres y la Equidad de Género / Study Center for the Advancement of Women and Gender Equality
CEPPS	Consortium for Elections and Political Processes Strengthening
COFIPE	Código Federal de Instituciones y Procedimientos Electorales (federal electoral code)
CPDP	Consortio para el Diálogo Parlamentario / Consortium for Parliamentary Dialogue and Gender Equity
CSO	Civil Society Organization
FLACSO	Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales / Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences
GEMIG	Gasto Etiquetado para las Mujeres y la Igualdad de Género (government fund earmarked for women and gender equality)
ICADEP	Instituto de Capacitación y Desarrollo Político (PRI's internal training institute)
IFE	Instituto Federal Electoral / Federal Electoral Institute
INE	Instituto Nacional Electoral / National Electoral Institute
INAFED	Instituto Nacional para el Federalismo y el Desarrollo Municipal / National Institute for Federalism and Municipal Development
INMUJERES	Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres / National Women's Institute
LEGIPE	Ley General de Instituciones y Procedimientos Electorales (electoral law)
MSI	Management Systems International
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NED	National Endowment for Democracy
ONMPRI	Organismo Nacional de Mujeres Priistas (women's organization of the PRI)
PAN	Partido Acción Nacional / National Action Party
PPM	Secretaría de Promoción Política de la Mujer (women's organization of the PAN)
PRD	Partido de la Revolución Democrática / Party of the Democratic Revolution
PRI	Partido Revolucionario Institucional / Institutional Revolutionary Party

REAMM	Red de Apoyo a Mujeres Municipalistas / Support Network for Local Women
TEPJF	Tribunal Electoral del Poder Judicial de la Federación / Federal Election Tribunal
UFRPP	Unidad de Fiscalización de los Recursos de los Partidos Políticos / Unit on Accountability and Control of Political Party Resources (in IFE/INE)
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WiP	Women in Power

# MAP OF MEXICO



## I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Women in Power (WiP) project's case study of Mexico maps and reviews the impact of United States Agency for International Development (USAID) programming in women's leadership and political empowerment between 2009 and 2013. In May 2014, the project conducted 26 interviews with stakeholders to identify key results, challenges and lessons learned.

Mexico has made significant advances in democratization, as well as various indicators of gender equality, in recent years. The issue of women's political representation first reached the political agenda in the 1990s as political parties began to adopt gender quotas, sparking a debate that led to a series of quota regulations at the national level.

In 2008, a revision to the electoral code established a 40 percent gender quota and earmarked 2 percent of party funding to provide political training for women. Following a constitutional amendment guaranteeing parity between women and men in political life, a new round of electoral reforms in 2014 increased the quota to 50 percent and the funding earmark to 3 percent.

Women's political empowerment has emerged as an important issue in the gender equality agenda, alongside efforts to bring gender perspective into policymaking and state administration. A variety of alliances, both permanent and temporary, have developed at various levels. Widespread public support for women's political empowerment spans the executive, legislative and judicial branches.

USAID awarded funding to the National Democratic Institute (NDI) to support women's leadership and political empowerment as part of a broader Consortium for Elections and Political Processes Strengthening (CEPPS) program. The effort pursued five sets of activities specific to women's political participation: technical assistance to gender secretariats and training units within the major political parties; colloquia on women's participation in politics; training of female candidates for elections at the state and local levels; training of female elected officials; and support for advocacy activities.

In addition to increasing the number of women elected, partially attributable to USAID funding, the main impact of these activities was an initiative to ensure greater compliance with the 2 percent party funding regulation, implemented both at the federal and subnational levels. This initiative is known as the 2% + More Women in Politics campaign (2% campaign).

Lessons learned and best practices included NDI's role as a convener and facilitator of the 2% campaign; the creation of partnerships with other organizations to multiply financial and other resources; engagements among activists and government officials to enhance gender awareness within government institutions, including among men in these spaces; and the replication of successful methodologies at the federal, state and municipal levels.

Challenges to USAID programming included the lack of sufficient funding; adapting training curricula to the needs of women at the local level; grappling with the competing agendas of different groups; sustaining momentum after key reforms were achieved; and political

differences among women, together with political violence and harassment, which hamper the empowerment of female officials and their ability to achieve policy reforms for women.

Women's presence across government institutions is uneven. The highest proportion of women is in the legislative branch, the only sector subject to gender quota legislation. However, their proportion of leadership positions in committees is lower than their overall percentage in both congressional chambers. While more than 30 percent of deputies and senators are women, they constitute less than 20 percent of Cabinet ministers and top technocrats and less than 10 percent of mayors, with no female state governors. Women also occupy less than 20 percent of seats in the judicial branch at all levels, except the district level, where they have a marginally higher share. The security sector is the least feminized, with less than 10 percent women in the military, the majority serving at the two lowest ranks.

The impact of women in legislative institutions is evident, with the rise in the number of female deputies and senators being associated with the passage of laws on gender equality. All the same, the presence of women did not necessarily result in equal numbers of policy gains for women in every legislative session. Nonetheless, quotas were also symbolically important, enabling citizens to see many more women in political office and to some extent eroding traditional gender roles. Another indication of changed discourse is that few politicians today, male or female, openly oppose gender equality reforms.

Recommendations for future programming include replicating the role of NDI as convener and facilitator; leveraging other resources to stretch the program budget; designing activities in line with women's needs during all phases of the electoral cycle (pre-election, election and post-election); addressing the issue of political finance and fundraising for female candidates; strategizing for sustainability of program initiatives; fostering the creation of women's networks at all levels of politics; remaining engaged on the ground in Mexico; offering training on defending one's political rights; expanding the scope and reach of gender training exercises; collecting sex-disaggregated and gender-sensitive data; and working to strengthen the capacity of civil society organizers.

The final women's leadership and political empowerment activity in this program was in June 2013. The women's leadership and political empowerment component was not included in the subsequent cost extension of CEPPS programming in Mexico. This shift has little to do with the importance of the topic or the effectiveness of NDI interventions, but was primarily motivated by the move to Merida-based funding, with its focus on strengthening human rights, rule of law and security. Rising political violence against women, an issue mentioned in nearly every interview, points to an area that requires critical attention and that falls squarely within the priorities of the Merida program.

## **II. INTRODUCTION**

The Women in Power (WiP) project is a learning activity supported by the Center of Excellence on Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance in USAID's Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance Bureau. Its goal is to further USAID's understanding of women's political leadership and empowerment, including the results of selected agency programs. In addition to mapping and assessing the agency's programming in this area, the



project is piloting a new measure of women's leadership and political influence while providing recommendations for future programming and research.

This project is being implemented in partnership with Management Systems International (MSI), whose team includes three leading academic specialists on women's political empowerment. The work is taking place in three phases from October 2013 to December 2014, and includes: (1) documenting and examining a series of programs aimed at increasing women's political leadership and empowerment, (2) performing qualitative case studies taking a deeper look at the objectives and achievements of select programs in Cambodia, Georgia, Jordan, Kenya and Mexico and (3) testing a new measure of women's leadership and power across all formal government sectors (executive, judicial, security, and legislative) with data from at least 20 countries, including those examined in the five case studies, to provide a more nuanced and informative measure of women's leadership.

Phase one of the desktop study examined almost 100 activities in 39 countries dating back to 2008. The program in Mexico, called "Consolidate Political Parties, Civil Society and Consensus Building Processes," was implemented by NDI and the International Republican Institute (IRI) between 2009 and 2013 and was relatively successful and innovative. This report maps the activity and its impact from various stakeholders' points of view; its aim is to enable USAID to better understand how these results were achieved, as well as to identify the main challenges and lessons learned from the activity by USAID, implementers, local partners and beneficiaries.

The case study team in Mexico included Mona Lena Krook, an academic expert on women's political empowerment; Silvia Gurrola Bonilla, a Mexican specialist on gender issues; and Julie Denham, a senior adviser on elections and political transitions with USAID. Twenty-six meetings were held: one with NDI headquarters staff in Washington, D.C., two with USAID/Mexico staff and 23 with individuals who participated in the activity or could provide insight into the broader context of these events. Interviewees included NDI and IRI staff; elected women at the national, state and local levels; officials in the political parties; parliamentary staff; women in civil society organizations (CSOs); staff at the national women's institute; election judges and administrators; and academics.

The topics discussed during the interviews included:

1. Results achieved by the activity, from the perspective of the donor, implementer, beneficiaries and other stakeholders;
2. Contribution that the USAID program made to increasing women's descriptive representation and leadership opportunities;
3. Whether this program was implemented in isolation, or took place alongside other local or international initiatives;
4. Meaning of women's legislative presence, in terms of access to real centers of power;
5. Whether there were missed opportunities or other types of interventions that USAID should consider in the area of women's political empowerment.

A secondary objective during the fieldwork was to collect as much data as possible, for phase three of the larger study, about women's political leadership and empowerment — beyond counting the number of women in the legislature.

### III. CONTEXT: KEY ACTORS, INSTITUTIONS, STRUCTURES AND FRAMES

#### Contextual Factors

Mexico has made significant advances in democratic consolidation in recent years. Electoral reforms have contributed to more political competition, but democratic institutions face many challenges and are not representative or inclusive of many sectors of society. According to a public opinion survey, only 44.6 percent of Mexicans are satisfied with democracy<sup>1</sup> and 66 percent have little or no trust in political parties.<sup>2</sup> The country has a mixed electoral system. The lower house, or Chamber of Deputies, has 500 members, with 300 elected by plurality vote in single-member constituencies and 200 by proportional representation in five districts of 40 candidates each. The upper house, or Senate, has 128 members, with 96 elected in three-seat constituencies and 32 by proportional representation nationwide.

In the most recent general elections in July 2012, three parties won the majority of seats: the Institutional Revolutionary Party (Partido Revolucionario Institucional, PRI), the National Action Party (Partido Acción Nacional, PAN) and the Party of the Democratic Revolution (Partido de la Revolución Democrática, PRD). For the first time in Mexican history, both houses of Congress comprised more than 30 percent women: 34.4 percent in the Senate and 37.4 percent in the Chamber of Deputies.<sup>3</sup> Since 2008, the federal election code has required 40 percent of nominations to be female candidates, but following a series of other gender quota rules in place since the 1990s,<sup>4</sup> this gain was largely the result of a 2011 ruling by the Federal Election Tribunal (Tribunal Electoral del Poder Judicial de la Federación, or TEPJF), which closed a loophole in the law that had permitted parties to nominate less than 40 percent women due to the procedures of candidate selection used. In addition, a reform in 2008 earmarked 2 percent of parties' public funding for programs advancing women's political development and training.

#### Overall Status of Women in Country

Mexico has made gains toward greater gender equality in a variety of spheres over the last 20 years, including education, labor force participation, and political representation. According to the World Economic Forum's most recent Gender Gap Report for 2013,<sup>5</sup> Mexico ranks 68th of 136 countries, up from 98 in 2009 (pp. 8–9). More women are enrolling in university courses, seeking paid employment and putting themselves forward as political candidates (USAID, 2012). Gains in parliamentary representation have been particularly notable in recent years, growing from 18 percent in the Senate and 23 percent in the Chamber of

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/mexico/2010-culturapolitica.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.seguridadcondemocracia.org/administrador\\_de\\_carpetas/OCOIM/pdf/Encuesta%20CIDENA%202011\\_vF.pdf](http://www.seguridadcondemocracia.org/administrador_de_carpetas/OCOIM/pdf/Encuesta%20CIDENA%202011_vF.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/arc/classif310812.htm>

<sup>4</sup> Earlier reforms included a 1993 recommendation that parties select female candidates, a 1996 recommendation that parties aim for 30 percent female candidates without any sanctions, and a 2002 law requiring 30 percent female candidates with sanctions for noncompliance.

<sup>5</sup> [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GenderGap\\_Report\\_2013.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GenderGap_Report_2013.pdf)

Deputies to more than 30 percent women in both houses today, which is above average compared with global and regional figures.<sup>6</sup>

Despite these gains, notable gender gaps remain. In terms of economic participation, 47 percent of adult women (compared to 84 percent of adult men) are active in the labor force (World Economic Forum, 2013, p. 280). High university enrollment by women has not translated into similar levels of employment, especially in technical and professional fields. As a result, wage gaps for women and men with similar levels of education remain high and women overall tend to be concentrated in informal, unskilled and low-wage activities (USAID, 2012, pp. 10, 20, 27). Men retain many of the decision-making positions in most political bodies, as 82.4 percent of Cabinet ministers, 83.7 percent of top technocrats, 100 percent of governors, 95.3 percent of mayors, 77.8 percent of Supreme Court judges, 85.7 percent of Electoral Tribunal magistrates and 94.2 percent of personnel in the army and air force. Public opinion data indicates, however, that citizens are favorable toward women's participation in politics, education and business, with between 70 percent and 80 percent of respondents disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with statements like “men make better political leaders than women do”; “a university education is more important for a boy than for a girl”; “when jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women”; and “men make better business executives than women do” (World Values Survey, 2010–2014).<sup>7</sup>

## Major Changes in Women's Leadership and Empowerment

### Historic political conditions

Women gained the right to vote in 1953, but until recently the number of elected women was relatively low: by the mid-1990s, when the first quota recommendations were introduced, women made up only 14.2 percent of the Chamber of Deputies and 12.5 percent of the Senate.<sup>8</sup> The occasion to commemorate the 60th anniversary of women's right to vote in 2013 presented a crucial window of opportunity to push forward the debate on gender parity. At an event convened on this issue in October 2013, President Enrique Peña Nieto — after being lobbied by women — publically backed instituting gender parity in the Mexican constitution, to be followed by changes to secondary laws governing the conduct of elections. This commitment was integrated into a broader package of electoral reforms that included eliminating nonconsecutive re-election to enhance democratic accountability. The new set of secondary laws was approved in May 2014. When asked how and why the principle of parity was approved, numerous interviewees pointed to the symbolism of the anniversary celebrations, saying it created a positive environment for defending women's political rights, leading the president and others to openly declare their support — even if, inside the political parties, male leaders and activities more generally were less favorable toward female candidates.

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<sup>6</sup> The current world averages stand at 22.3% for single and lower houses and 19.8% for upper houses. The average levels for Latin America are 25.7 percent and 26.4 percent. See <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/arc/classif010197.htm>

## Political empowerment on women's movement agendas

Women's political empowerment came onto the agendas of women's movements and political parties in Mexico in the early 1990s. The creation of women's wings or organizations within the parties predates this debate, but as in other countries, these sections historically recruited female supporters to the party rather than directly empowering women within and outside party structures. The first party to adopt a 30 percent gender quota for political candidates was the PRD in 1993, despite nominating fewer female candidates than any other political party in 1991 (Bruhn, 2003, p. 109). The PRI followed in 1996 with a similarly phrased quota — “no more than 70 percent of one sex” — although the placement requirement was smaller (“at least one in each segment of 10 candidates”) than PRD's (“at least one for each block of three candidates”).

These campaigns originated in the nonpartisan Convención Nacional de Mujeres por la Democracia organized in 1991 among women in civil society and the three major parties to secure the nomination of more female candidates, hoping that this would bring more women to office and lead to the greater promotion of women's rights (Rodríguez, 2003, p. 170). Realizing that informal promises from party leaders were not reliable, women in PRD sought to formalize this requirement at the following party congress. The campaign in the PRI, several years later, drew more strongly on international commitments following the 1995 United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. The PAN, in contrast, did not adopt a formal quota but did increase the number of women nominated (Bruhn, 2003). At the national level, the cross-party campaign resulted in a 1993 insertion to the federal electoral code, the Código Federal de Instituciones y Procedimientos Electorales (COFIPE), recommending that parties promote greater participation of women in political life by nominating them as electoral candidates.<sup>9</sup>

## Changes among strategies, goals and actors

Debates on women's political representation spawned a series of subsequent regulations at the national level. In 1996, the electoral code was altered to encourage parties, when selecting candidates to the Senate and Chamber of Deputies, not to exceed more than 70 percent of candidates of the same sex.<sup>10</sup> The first obligatory gender quota was not instituted until 2002, however, when a revision to Article 175 of the COFIPE required that party lists not include more than 70 percent of candidates of the same sex, with at least one of every three on the proportional representation lists being of a different sex.<sup>11</sup> In the case of noncompliance, the Federal Electoral Institute (Instituto Federal Electoral, or IFE) would require parties to rectify their candidate registration within 48 hours. If parties did not submit a revised register, they would be subject to a public reprimand and rejection of their candidates. The reform permitted an exception for candidates in the majoritarian component of the electoral system whose selection resulted from internal primary elections.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Fraction III, Article 175, COFIPE.

<sup>10</sup> Fraction XXII, Article 5, COFIPE.

<sup>11</sup> Article 175a and 175b, COFIPE.

<sup>12</sup> Article 175c, COFIPE.

In 2008, the electoral code was revised to increase the gender quota to at least 40 percent of primary candidates (“propietarios,” as opposed to “suplentes,” or alternates).<sup>13</sup> The revision gave parties 48 hours to respond in the case of noncompliance, followed by a public warning and 24 more hours to alter their registers. Proportional representation lists were also required to include at least two candidates of a different sex per group of five candidates.<sup>14</sup> The new reform opened a new loophole, excepting any nominations for the majoritarian component that were the result of a “democratic election process” as defined by each political party.<sup>15</sup> This exception was closed followed a historic decision by the TEPJF in which the magistrates resolved that parties must guarantee at least 40 percent candidates of each sex in both parts of the electoral system and that every candidate have a same-sex alternate.<sup>16</sup> In 2014, as part of a larger discussion on electoral reform, the Constitution was revised to require that parties establish rules to guarantee parity between the sexes for candidacy to federal and state legislatures.<sup>17</sup> New secondary laws followed, including an electoral law (Ley General de Instituciones y Procedimientos Electorales, or LEGIPE) mandating that parties promote and guarantee gender parity when nominating candidates for the national congress, the state congresses and the legislative assembly of the Federal District.<sup>18</sup> Proportional representation election lists must alternate between sexes, and primary candidates and alternates must be the same sex.<sup>19</sup>

The trajectory in Mexico has thus been toward stronger legal regulation, increasing both the percentage of female candidates and the requirements on political parties to ensure greater gender parity in electoral politics. Women’s mobilization at a variety of levels has been centrally important throughout this process, although men have been crucial for the passage of quota reforms — regardless of whether or not they agreed in principle or in practice with the goal of women’s political empowerment. The first party to adopt a quota, the PRD, had a rule at party congress plenary sessions that delegates voted by raising a ballot card, which facilitated the quota passage; with a secret ballot, the initiative likely would have failed (Bruhn, 2003). Later reforms at both the party and national levels were, in addition to being propelled by women’s mobilization in civil society and within all the major parties (Rodríguez, 2003), also inspired and bolstered by calls for gender-balanced decision-making in the Beijing Platform for Action, signed unanimously by UN member states at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. Mexican reforms fall in line with similar developments elsewhere in Latin America (Crocker, 2011). By 2002, nearly all countries in the region had adopted 30 percent quotas laws mandating the nomination of women in elections to the national congress (Htun and Jones, 2002), suggesting a regional diffusion effect.

Later developments, however, appear propelled most by opportunities in the domestic political context. In 2007–2008, a variety of legal and constitutional reforms were being considered in relation to elections, providing a crucial opening for the insertion of the

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<sup>13</sup> Article 219, Paragraph 1, COFIPE.

<sup>14</sup> Article 220, Paragraph 1, COFIPE.

<sup>15</sup> Article 220, Paragraph 2, COFIPE.

<sup>16</sup> SUP-JDC-12624/2011.

<sup>17</sup> Fraction I, Article 41, Mexican Constitution.

<sup>18</sup> Article 232, Paragraphs 3-5, and Article 233, LEGIPE.

<sup>19</sup> Article 234, LEGIPE.

40 percent quota and a new COFIPE article mandating that each party designate at least 2 percent of its public funding for training, promotion and development of women's political leadership.<sup>20</sup> The 2014 reform to the Law on Political Parties (*Ley General de Partidos Políticos*) increased this earmark to 3 percent,<sup>21</sup> although several interviewees said some initial proposals would have raised it to as much as 6 percent.

In 2007–2008, a new norm established earmarks for a certain proportion of Mexico's national budget each year for projects promoting women and gender equality, called the *Gasto Etiquetado para las Mujeres y la Igualdad de Género* (GEMIG). This had been a focus of women's organizing since at least 1996. Starting in 2003, the Committee for Equity and Gender in the Chamber of Deputies began incorporating a gender perspective in budget questions. Following a series of new laws promoting women's rights — including the Laws for Equality between Women and Men (2006), Women's Access to a Life Free of Violence (2007) and the Federal Budget and Taxation (2006) law establishing gender equity as a criterion for administering public resources — two transitory articles were incorporated into the 2007 Federal Budget Decree referring to the promotion of gender equality by the federal government and the role of the National Women's Institute (*Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres*, or INMUJERES; the state organ responsible for women's issues) as responsible for submitting trimestral reports on actions to advance women's status, including in the federal budget. These earmarks were transformed into their own chapter in the 2009 Federal Budget Decree. These earmarks were used for, among other programs, courses on gender for staff in various branches of the state apparatus.

Gender parity in politics first appeared in a concrete way on the political agenda in 2002, when the PRI established a 50 percent quota in its statutes for internal party positions and among candidates to elected positions. The PRD integrated gender parity into its statutes in 2007 for internal positions and for party candidates in proportional representation lists. Revisions in the 2010 statutes included the principle of gender parity, as well as a quota of 20 percent young people and a guarantee of candidates from migrant, indigenous and sexual diversity sectors. The demand for parity at the national level dates back to at least 2010,<sup>22</sup> when past, current and future female deputies and senators called for constitutional reform and a change to the electoral code to ensure greater female participation. Many of these women emerged as crucial advocates for parity after the 2012 elections, although interviewees noted that October 2013 events to commemorate the 60th anniversary of women's right to vote were crucial. President Peña Nieto announced an initiative to reform the legal framework to mandate parity, also emphasizing that the National Development Plan for 2013–2018 included a gender perspective for the first time.<sup>23</sup> The Constitution changed to incorporate the parity principle in February 2014, followed by a new electoral code in May.

While grounded in national debates, however, it is also worth noting that the Mexican reforms follow similar developments elsewhere in Latin America. Between 2009 and 2010,

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<sup>20</sup> Fraction V, Article 78b, COFIPE.

<sup>21</sup> Fraction V, Article 51a, *Ley General de Partidos Políticos*.

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.cimacnoticias.com.mx/node/43206>

<sup>23</sup> As part of this change, gender units were set up in all the ministries to ensure that a gender perspective was mainstreamed in all policies and activities.

Bolivia, Costa Rica and Ecuador<sup>24</sup> increased existing quota policies to 50 percent (Archenti and Tula, 2014; Llanos, 2013). Other regions have also recently introduced parity requirements of various types, including Libya (2012), Senegal (2012) and Tunisia (2011) — suggesting that the principle of parity is emerging as a new international norm. Recent efforts to introduce a bill to criminalize violence against women in Mexican politics are similarly attuned to initiatives elsewhere in Latin America. Explicitly referring to a Bolivian law approved in 2012 criminalizing political violence and harassment against women, a bill approved by the Senate in March 2013 reformed the Law on Women’s Access to a Life Free from Violence to criminalize acts of physical, psychological and sexual violence against one or more women that sought to impede their access to or carry out a position of political representation. The Chamber of Deputies has not yet taken up the bill — interviewees presented conflicting reports on whether it would be considered and, if so, whether it would pass — but TEPJF, the National Electoral Institute (Instituto Nacional Electoral, or INE, formerly the IFE), and INMUJERES organized an event on this theme in June 2014 with leaders and representatives from the various political parties to better enable women to access decision-making positions.

A final innovation in the 2014 electoral reforms concerned indigenous women’s political participation. In 1992, constitutional reform recognized Mexico’s multicultural heritage, initiating state-level debates over indigenous representation. By the mid-1990s, local community practices — or “usos y costumbres” (uses and customs) — began to be recognized as an official system for governing local political affairs in indigenous communities in the state of Oaxaca. However, the state’s electoral code also established that such elections not violate citizens’ rights in the Mexican Constitution. These debates affect indigenous women’s political rights, insofar as arguments related to usos y costumbres have been used to deny indigenous women the right to vote or hold political office (Vázquez García, 2011). The new LEGIPE recognizes the right of indigenous communities to organize elections according to traditional practices, but also specifies that they must guarantee the participation of men and women “in conditions of equality” and respect the norms established by national and local constitutions and associated laws.<sup>25</sup>

### Political empowerment’s importance to other issues

Women’s political empowerment has emerged as an important issue in the gender equality agenda, alongside efforts to bring a gender perspective into policymaking and state administration. These strategies are complementary; gender quotas bring more women into positions of political decision-making, while incorporating gender as a concept aims to generate more gender-sensitive public policy (cf. Krook and True, 2012). Over the last several years, important new laws relate to equality between women and men and violence against women, including femicide (the large-scale killing of women in certain parts of the country). Vigorous debates have also emerged over women’s reproductive rights and the rights of lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgender people. Women’s political rights, however, apparently has been most able to bring women together across party lines; as various interviewees noted, the topic can transcend individual party ideologies.

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<sup>24</sup> The electoral code in Panama, modified in 2012, requires that candidates for party primaries and internal elections include 50% women.

<sup>25</sup> Article 26, Paragraph 4, LEGIPE.



## Influences on Women's Political Empowerment

### Main drivers of change

Debates on women's political empowerment in Mexico have included a variety of actors. Indeed, a striking element of this case is the many alliances — permanent or temporary — that actors have forged at various levels. In civil society, both activists and academics — groups that sometimes overlap — have called attention to gender gaps, collected data, developed arguments for change and implemented training programs at the local level. One example is 2% y + Mujeres en Política (2% and More Women in Politics), a campaign conducted by a coalition of women who mobilized to pressure the accounting unit of the Federal Electoral Institute to more carefully scrutinize receipts provided by political parties to comply with the earmark of 2 percent of party funding for women's leadership training. One partner in that campaign was the Support Network for Local Women (Red de Apoyo a Mujeres Municipalistas, or REAMM), which provides gender training and development of various political skills for women seeking local political office. A new online master's degree in public policy and gender, offered by the Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO) in Mexico, supports these efforts. The program initially sought to train civil servants using GEMIG funds earmarked for educating state officials in a gender perspective, but its students now also include elected officials and civil society activists.

Women's organizations in the political parties have contributed as well, mobilizing on questions of women's rights and women's political leadership within the parties. Various interviewees noted that they have designed and carried out a variety of state- and local-level training programs, as well as worked to identify women, especially at the local level, to participate in the trainings and eventually stand as candidates. In the three major political parties, these organizations are the Organismo Nacional de Mujeres Priistas (ONMPRI) of the PRI, the Secretaría de Promoción Política de la Mujer (PPM) of the PAN and the Secretaría Nacional de Equidad y Género of the PRD. Party women have also participated in a cross-party network known as the Red Mujeres en Plural (Plural Women Network), which unites women across different political ideologies — as well as some activists and academics — to promote women's political empowerment.<sup>26</sup> The network operates informally through an email list, avoiding any trappings of a formal institution — including a website or Facebook page — that could be associated with one individual or political grouping over others. An illustrative action is the May 2014 meeting with councilors at INE to discuss the need to guarantee parity in electoral administration at all levels, complementing a decision earlier in the year to accept applications for the national electoral service only from women during the 2013–2014 cycle (aiming to increase women's representation in the service to 25 percent).<sup>27</sup>

Female senators and deputies have been actively involved in the struggle for women's political empowerment in Mexico. Women in the 2006–2009 Congress, for example, proposed and mobilized support for the 40 percent gender quota and the 2 percent party funding reform, taking advantage of opportunities for electoral reform available at the time. A woman who was part of this process described the cooperation across party lines as

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<sup>26</sup> This network also participated in the 2% campaign.

<sup>27</sup> [http://genero.ife.org.mx/ife/ife\\_ConcursoSPE2013\\_00sep2013.html](http://genero.ife.org.mx/ife/ife_ConcursoSPE2013_00sep2013.html)



operating like an informal women's caucus. The current congress, elected in 2012, for the first time comprises more than 30 percent women members in both chambers. Although women are still a minority of deputies and senators, the fact that they are a larger minority than ever was significant, one interviewee observed, because any changes to the Constitution had to be approved by a two-thirds majority. The force of their numbers enabled women to ensure that the demand for parity remained part of the larger package of proposed electoral reforms. Women's cooperation across party lines has been particularly notable in the Senate, where the Gender Equality Commission has taken the initiative to review all bills proposed and ensure they include a gender perspective.

INMUJERES has been a central participant in state-level debates and policy proposals to support women's political empowerment. Established in 2001, the group seeks to establish a culture of equality and equity that supports full rights for Mexican women and men. It includes a program unit on social and political participation, indicating the importance INMUJERES places on this issue. A staff member in this program unit drafted the 50 percent policy proposal presented by President Peña Nieto. As noted, it continues to be a vital player in subsequent initiatives to empower women politically, including in relation to political violence.

Elsewhere in the executive branch, the accounting unit — Unidad de Fiscalización — within IFE (now INE) became an unexpected advocate of women's empowerment after a meeting in which women from the various parties (plus some activists and academics) asked the head of this unit to explain how the 2 percent funding requirement was being spent by the political parties. This led the IFE general counsel to unanimously adopt a resolution to clarify the types of activities this money may fund.<sup>28</sup> More recently, INE created a gender unit, the Unidad Técnico de Igualdad de Género y No Discriminación, at the end of 2013 to integrate a gender perspective in all areas and at all levels. In July 2014, it adopted a protocol to prevent and punish incidents of sexual harassment within the institution, with claims being analyzed from a gender perspective.

TEPJF has also been a crucial ally in ensuring the application of gender quotas. In 2011, magistrates issued a historic ruling, resolving that parties must guarantee that each sex represent at least 40 percent of their candidates for both the majoritarian and proportional representation seats, regardless of the method of candidate selection, and that every candidate's alternate be the same sex. The first measure closed an important loophole in the implementation of gender quotas, while the second eliminated the possibility that female officeholders would be pressured to resign in favor of their male alternates. This issue came to prominence at the beginning of the 2009–2012 congress, when a group of female deputies resigned shortly after being elected and were replaced by men — suggesting their candidacies had been used to ensure compliance with the quota, but with no intention of them actually filling the office. These women are known informally as “las Juanitas.” In 2009, the tribunal also established the gender equity office and appointed a coordinator for institutionalizing a gender perspective in response to new congressional GEMIG earmarking requirements passed in 2008. In recent election cycles, court officials have, with civil society groups, trained local women to know and claim their rights, including challenging candidate selection processes within their own political parties.

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<sup>28</sup> Cristallinas Kaulitz et al. (2013). See also <http://genero.ife.org.mx/guiadosporciento>.

A final set of actors involved in these debates are international organizations and implementing partners, most notably NDI, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and UN Women. NDI was particularly vital in facilitating debates and networking among women from distinct spheres, reaching across sectors and spanning different political parties. Numerous interviewees stated that several initiatives, especially the 2% campaign, would not have been carried out to the fullest extent without NDI's involvement, seen as providing a neutral arena not tainted by allegiance to any party or political persuasion. UN Women (with the UNDP) has also been involved in several initiatives to map women's political participation in Mexico and to highlight and call for resolutions to violence against women in politics.<sup>29</sup>

### Main institutional influences and obstacles

Quite strikingly, official support for women's political empowerment is widespread, spanning the executive, legislative and judicial branches. In addition to the offices previously mentioned, GEMIG spending has also been earmarked for the justice system. As a result, a gender equality program, the Programa de Igualdad de Género, was created in 2008 within the Supreme Court, with the dual goals of sensitizing and training judges in a gender perspective to improve citizens' access to justice and enhancing the working environment by tackling issues of violence and discrimination within the institution itself. The program uses five strategies: research, training, linking, diffusing and evaluating. In 2013, the Supreme Court issued the Protocol for Judging with a Gender Perspective, distributed to judges around Mexico to ensure equality between women and men in the justice system. This outward acceptance of gender equality as a goal, however, is not fully reflected in the access of women to positions of influence in all of these sectors (see the "USAID Program Results Assessment" section that follows). Moreover, Mexico's federal system requires the gender parity legislation to also be adopted at the state level, which has occurred to varying degrees. To be fully realized, therefore, state and local laws must be harmonized with the federal requirements.

Further, despite apparent consensus for gender equality across the various branches, interviewees emphasized that political parties still greatly resist gender equality. Whereas the GEMIG mechanism for earmarking state spending to promote gender equality has noticeably transformed institutional structures and cultures, attempts to initiate similar transformations within the political parties have been mixed. Faced with gender quota requirements, parties across the political spectrum have engaged in creative misreadings of quota requirements, like applying the quota to alternates (*suplentes*) as well as primary candidates (*propietarios*) and placing women overwhelmingly in the alternate slots; opting to decide a vast proportion of their candidate selections via primaries and other methods permitting those selections to be exempt from the quota requirements; nominating women primarily to unwinnable districts; and accepting or arranging for female candidates to be replaced with their male substitutes following the elections. Parties also subverted the 2 percent party funding requirement in various ways, seeking reimbursement for expenses — like banners, T-shirts, computers or even fumigation services — that did not specifically aim to train or develop women's leadership skills. Although the TEPJF and the INE accounting

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<sup>29</sup> See [http://www.mx.undp.org/content/mexico/es/home/library/democratic\\_governance/participacion-politica-de-las-mujeres-en-mexico](http://www.mx.undp.org/content/mexico/es/home/library/democratic_governance/participacion-politica-de-las-mujeres-en-mexico) and [http://www.mx.undp.org/img/pdf/violencia\\_contra\\_las\\_mujeres\\_web.pdf](http://www.mx.undp.org/img/pdf/violencia_contra_las_mujeres_web.pdf).

unit have addressed these types of activities, several interviewees remain convinced that parties may still attempt to subvert the spirit of these various laws and regulations.

### Main structural obstacles

Debates on women's political empowerment in Mexico, as in other countries, have largely focused on the political determinants of women's access to elected office (cf. Krook 2010). Interviewees repeatedly mentioned concepts like "political rights" and "electoral justice," as well as Mexico's commitments to various international human rights documents supporting women's political participation. These laws and norms provide a basis for making claims that can be addressed in a more straightforward fashion. This can be a powerful strategy; one elected woman noted that she drew on the tools she learned in training with electoral tribunal officials to challenge her party's selection process, then becoming the rightful candidate and winning election to political office.

More indirectly, however, interviewees acknowledged other social and economic barriers, most obviously traditional gendered divisions of household labor and the tendency for female party activists and their contributions to be overlooked by party leaders. Women's participation can be further suppressed by high rates of political violence, affecting not just their ability to access education or employment (as noted in USAID's 2012 gender assessment in Mexico), but also their ability to participate in politics as activists, candidates and elected officials. Several interviewees, however, emphasized women's lack of economic resources to pursue political candidacies as perhaps the most powerful barrier. One estimated that it costs about 30,000 Mexican pesos (\$2,500) for a place as a candidate. Another noted that women often do not have the same level of personal financial resources as men, requiring them to raise their own funds with little help from their political parties — thus deterring women who would otherwise be interested and willing to run for office. This barrier can be overcome with family connections as the wife or daughter of a prominent male politician — but this resource is not available to all prospective female candidates. One interviewee also noted that experiences of women in politics may vary across Mexican states due to differing levels of economic and social development.

Several interviewees noted, however, that there are ways to combat these types of barriers — especially when offered by party elites as reason they cannot nominate more female candidates. They repeatedly mentioned three claims. The first was the excuse that "there are not enough women" to fulfill a gender quota. Party members responded that women active in the parties are often overlooked, with party leaders not recognizing even the most active by name. A judge noted that one counterstrategy was the publication of a long list of women activists' names in local newspapers to demonstrate to the parties that many women are politically active. A second refrain among party elites was that women "are not interested" or "do not want to be candidates." A study by INMUJERES, described in one of the interviews, found only a small portion of women who said that they were not interested. A larger percentage said family responsibilities prevented their candidacy, but they would consider running in the future. The largest share, however, said they had never been asked. This was revealing, given research from the United States and anecdotal evidence from many other countries showing that women often run for office only after someone else asks them to run. A third argument mentioned by interviewees suggested that "women are not capable." In addition to calling attention to the many active women in the parties, one interviewee pointed out that the resources for overcoming this problem — if it indeed

existed — were available through the 2 percent earmark for training and political development.

### Ideological and cultural influences

A common observation in almost all the interviews was that a culture of machismo pervades Mexican society and politics, despite widespread changes in laws and regulations supporting women's political empowerment. Many interviewees noted that this was especially the case with political parties, which one described as “Janus-faced” (like the Roman god with two faces), speaking outwardly in favor of gender equality but undermining its realization privately. This manifests in refusals to nominate women or invest party resources in their campaigns, as well as violence and harassment of female candidates and elected officials. However, it also extends to sexism and corruption within the parties. One respondent referred to the case of Cuauhtémoc Gutiérrez, president of the PRI in Mexico City and a beneficiary of a “Juanita” seat substitution arrangement, who allegedly used party funds — one interviewee claimed it was from the 2 percent funds designated for female leadership training — to recruit “hostesses” to provide sexual services to him and his acquaintances.<sup>30</sup> Others argued that, when women were included, their impact was undermined by their relegation to certain more “feminine” policy areas, like tourism, education or health. The machismo tendency to not associate women with top leadership positions is especially clear, however, among offices outside the quota requirement, where women are largely absent. This is the case among mayoral positions, for example, with only 6.8 percent women nationwide in 2012, and state governorships, where women held zero of 32 positions nationwide in 2012, down from two governors before that election.

A powerful tool for combating these tendencies is to ground claims for women's empowerment in international human rights norms. As various respondents pointed out, the government has signed these commitments, which hold the force of law in Mexico. This can neutralize opposition, since the state has an obligation to protect citizens' human rights. It may also explain the emphasis on political rights when defending gender quota implementation. The power of combating these cultural norms is also implicitly recognized in the many training efforts funded by the Mexican state, both within the state apparatus and inside political parties. Several interviewees said this has led to a tangible cultural transformation within state institutions, which focus on not only promoting gender equality in their work, but also cultivating a more gender-friendly work environment. These changes have been possible, at least in part, because they involve targeting both women and men in these institutions. Party trainings and the FLACSO master's program, interviewees said, may effectively reach members from younger generations — thus tackling the dynamics that socialize men, but not women, to pursue a political career. Finally, NDI explicitly recognized the challenges faced by women running for top municipal positions and implemented *Academías para Futuras Alcaldesas* (Future Women Mayors' Academies) in the states of Michoacán and Morelos between 2011 and 2012 to help prepare women to run for these positions.

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<sup>30</sup> In a similar story, the PAN party whip in the Chamber of Deputies was forced to resign in 2014 after being caught on video dancing with and groping young women at a party. See <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-28781684>

## IV. USAID PROGRAM RESULTS ASSESSMENT

### Programming Goals

USAID funds for women's political empowerment in Mexico were programmed through NDI,<sup>31</sup> as part of a broader three-year, \$2 million cooperative agreement with CEPPS. This agreement had three main objectives: (1) foster more accountable, responsive, transparent and effective political parties; (2) strengthen the capacity of female candidates, election officials and party activists and leaders to compete in elections and govern effectively; and (3) increase the capacity of civil society organizations to engage and collaborate with political parties and governments in policy formation. While objective two focused solely on women's leadership and participation, objectives one and three included significant activity streams that worked on building the capacity of political parties and civil society more broadly.

On women's participation specifically, objective one encouraged parties to become more transparent and inclusive by revising their internal policies to better address women's participation and gender equality. Objective two included efforts to foster party inclusiveness, indicated by the number of strategies and party policies implemented or revised to increase women's participation at the national or local level; a new fundraising network to assist female candidates in gaining access to campaign funding (an initiative that was not realized); and support for the Equity and Gender Committees in both houses of the Mexican Congress to advance consensus legislation related to women's rights. Objective three sought to equip women's organizations with skills and opportunities to engage in advocacy and policy reform with party and government representatives.

### Activities and Partners

A \$1 million award to NDI enabled USAID to support a series of activities with different actors, including the party gender secretariats, the gender and equity committees in Congress, civil society actors and government agencies, including the electoral management body and national women's institute.

#### Party training

One set of activities provided technical assistance to the gender secretariats and other organizations — including the political training units — in the three major Mexican political parties: PRI, PAN and PRD. Of the three, NDI worked most intensively with the PAN, supporting its gender secretariat PPM to develop annual work plans, as well as a three-year strategic plan to enhance women's participation within the party before the 2012 elections. NDI also helped the PPM develop a group of eight national trainers who adapted skills-building modules and prepared state-level trainers to implement the modules in their districts. Work with the PRI fostered greater collaboration between its gender secretariat ONMPRI and its training unit, the Instituto de Capacitación y Desarrollo Político (ICADEP),

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<sup>31</sup> The IRI mandate under this award did not include the promotion of women's leadership and political empowerment, but IRI staff noted that this theme surfaced when they facilitated workshops, especially regarding women's experience with gender-based political violence.

including co-organizing a two-day workshop in 2010 that trained 64 women on managing the media, developing a political message and using new technologies. Engagement with the PRD involved providing the gender and equity secretariat with feedback on its 2011 work plan.

### National conferences

A second set of activities co-organized national colloquia on women's participation in politics. These annual colloquia, usually held in the Congress, brought together hundreds of stakeholders from within government, the legislature, political parties, civil society, academia and the media to bring high-level attention to the issue of women's participation and advance the reform agenda. For example, in 2012, NDI convened a colloquium with IFE and INMUJERES on democracy from a gender perspective, focusing on the participation of women in the 2011–2012 electoral process, the impact of the 2011 TEPJF ruling on gender quotas and the presentation of an advocacy guide by NDI and INMUJERES titled “2% y + Mujeres en Política: Una Experiencia de Incidencia para Compartir” (“2% and + Women in Politics: An Experience to Share”), which was distributed at the event. In 2013, NDI co-organized “Iniciativa 6x60: Hacia una Agenda para la Igualdad Política” (“Initiative 6 x 60: Working Toward Political Equality”), a forum commemorating the 60th anniversary of women's suffrage in Mexico, with INMUJERES, IFE, the Commission on Gender and Equity in both houses of Congress, UN Women, and Mujeres al Poder. Via thematic panels, the organizers aimed to build multisectoral support for six political equality reform proposals and to establish a follow-on strategy for those interested in working to advance them. These proposals addressed topics like cultural and institutional barriers, the operation of parties, policies in Mexico aimed at achieving equality between men and women in elections, political participation of indigenous women and women's participation in local politics.

### Candidate training

A third set of activities trained female candidates, with a particular focus on local offices. In 2011, NDI organized — with INMUJERES, the Michoacán Electoral Institute and the Michoacán State Government Secretariat for Women — a six-month *Academia para Futuras Alcaldesas* (Future Women Mayors' Academy) in Michoacán, with the goal of increasing the number of women who would compete in and win mayoral elections in the state later that year. Of nearly 80 applicants, 51 women from various parties were selected to participate and received nearly 60 hours of targeted workshops, with topics chosen following focus groups with former women mayoral candidates from the PAN and PRI. The topics included motivating participants to realize their leadership potential and begin planning for their primary campaigns; managing time, forming a campaign team and combating discrimination in the primary process; consensus-building and negotiation skills and taking legal action against discriminatory practices; campaign financing and accounting procedures and targeting women and young voters; developing effective campaign messages and cultivating a positive relationship with the media, including managing an interview; and designing and implementing a strategic plan for the pre-electoral, electoral and post-electoral periods.

A similar *Academia para Futuras Alcaldesas* was implemented in 2011–2012 in Morelos, in cooperation with INMUJERES and the Morelos State Government Secretariat for Women. Over four months, it sought to increase the number of women running in and winning mayoral elections in Morelos in 2012. Forty women from various parties participated and



received nearly 50 hours of targeted workshops on the following topics: gender theory and identifying obstacles to women's political participation produced by existing gender roles; the political and electoral rights of women and creating an effective campaign team; negotiation and consensus-building skills; message development and media management; campaign strategies, including voter outreach, platform creation, fundraising and recruiting volunteers; and cultivating effective networks and developing a professional image.

### Training for women elected officials

A fourth, but much more limited, activity trained female elected officials. In 2010, NDI, INMUJERES and El Consorcio para el Diálogo Parlamentario (the Consortium for Parliamentary Dialogue and Gender Equity, CPDP) conducted a workshop with more than 40 recently elected state legislators, representing seven political parties and 12 states. The topics covered included developing legislative agreements, developing a legislative agenda, budgeting with a gender perspective and generating support for gender equality reforms.

### Advocacy for legal reforms

A final set of activities supported advocacy at the state and national levels to raise awareness and implement legislation to promote women's political leadership. In early 2010, NDI began meeting with civil society organizations to plan a campaign to guide party spending on women's leadership training. NDI helped these groups design a strategy to engage women from parties and other civic organizations to provide feedback on a draft reform of the 2 percent party funding regulation and to ensure that the funding be used for women's leadership training and empowerment. Over the next year, via a series of facilitated discussions, NDI helped the CSOs consolidate a multisectoral group of stakeholders — political parties, civic organizations, academics, legislators, IFE and international organizations — to support this reform. NDI then provided technical assistance to the multisectoral group to develop a communications plan, message, media strategy, logo and online activism strategy (including a web portal, online petition and Facebook and Twitter accounts) to launch the 2% y + Mujeres en Política campaign. NDI also facilitated working sessions between the 2% campaign, political parties and IFE accounting unit to build consensus on reform language and get the proposed regulation put to a vote by IFE's General Council. In July 2011, IFE's General Council voted unanimously to adopt the regulation as written, which was a major victory for the campaign.

Building on this success, NDI assisted members of 2% y + Mujeres en Política in 2012 to develop a work plan for disseminating the new accountability regulation passed by the IFE in July 2011 and for monitoring the application of this rule within the parties. NDI then worked with 2% y + Mujeres en Política to develop an advocacy toolkit for female activists at the state level. Party funding at this level is not under the jurisdiction of IFE, although some states have earmarked similar funds for women's training at this level. By summer 2012, this guide was completed and a memorandum of understanding was signed with INMUJERES for publication and distribution. Upon publication in the fall, NDI and INMUJERES presented the guide at the previously mentioned colloquium on democracy from a gender perspective. In addition to being distributed at this event, the guide was shared with CSOs, party gender secretariats, universities, think tanks, embassies and foundations, as well as the 32 state women's institutes. A series of one-day events presenting

the guide as a tool for state-level advocacy efforts then took place in Sinaloa, Puebla, Morelos, Quintana Roo and Veracruz in late 2012 and early 2013.

## Activities by Other Donors

Other international organizations working in the area of women's political empowerment in Mexico include UN Women and UNDP. As noted, both organizations co-sponsored a number of the colloquia and seminars, including the "Initiative 6 x 60" forum commemorating the 60th anniversary of women's suffrage in Mexico, with NDI and various Mexican state actors. Both organizations also provided support for a series of publications — issued in collaboration with partners like the TEPJF, FLACSO and International IDEA — addressing topics like women's political participation (Hevia Rocha, 2012b), the political-electoral rights of women (Hevia Rocha, 2012a), the 60th anniversary of women's right to vote (Hevia Rocha et al, 2013) and the need to combat violence against women in politics (TEPJF et al, 2012). These pamphlets and books, available in print and online, seek to advance and support ongoing debates in Mexico by providing statistics on women's participation, overviews of women's political rights and the mechanisms for claiming them, and short introductions to international best practices that might serve as inspiration for further reforms.

UNDP also collaborated with the IFE on limited electoral observation, specifically looking at women's participation in 2012, developing a questionnaire and interviewing 23 elected women about their experience as candidates. This led the IFE to launch a new initiative in 2013, funded by the Mexican government and implemented by REAMM, to prepare women for political leadership and participation. A final activity supported by UN Women and UNDP was the SUMA Initiative,<sup>32</sup> a collaboration between five civil society organizations — Equidad de Género; Ciudadanía, Trabajo y Familia; Instituto de Liderazgo Simone de Beauvoir; Mujeres Trabajadoras Unidas; and Inclusión Ciudadana y Liderazgo, Gestión y Nueva Política — with the goal of training more than 1,500 women over three years to run for national and statewide political office. Initial funds were awarded in 2010 through the UN Women's Global Gender Equality Fund and additional funding came from INMUJERES, IFE and TEPJF, enabling the program to expand its reach from nine to 15 states.

In addition, the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), a U.S.-based foundation, funded NDI to implement the "Making Democracy Deliver" activity, which included a component on providing training for newly elected women officials at the state and local levels. This activity was implemented concurrently with NDI's USAID-funded activity and enabled the institute to provide training to some of the women elected after Future Women Mayors' Academies in Michoacan and Morelos.

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<sup>32</sup> See [www.suma-mujeres.com](http://www.suma-mujeres.com)



## Accomplishments by USAID-Supported Programs

### Tangible results

USAID-supported programs in Mexico achieved a variety of tangible results related to women's leadership and political empowerment.

*Party gender secretariats increased the quality and frequency of training opportunities available to women.* NDI worked with the political party gender secretariats, sharing materials and training methodologies to enhance their programs on women's leadership. In 2010, the PAN PPM adopted a new strategy to maximize its programs by creating a training-of-trainers project to prepare more than 200 women from 14 states to replicate gender and leadership workshops at the state and municipal levels. This approach was a direct result of NDI technical assistance and party resources were allocated to its further development. In 2011, the PAN PPM created a standard set of materials and training modules for workshops on women's political participation. The PAN PPM's national director for training at the time, Lucia Carrillo, said training programs had long existed inside the party, but without any real strategy; with the help of NDI, they were able to develop better materials and provide more effective, higher-quality training to women at the local level. In 2012, the PAN PPM presented a plan to provide women members with training on topics like gender and human rights, as well as conducted its second Escuela de Mujeres Líderes del PAN (PAN women's leadership school) following NDI technical assistance, based on the examples of the Future Women Mayors' Academies in Michoacán and Morelos.

In the PRI, NDI technical assistance in 2010 fostered intraparty collaboration between its training institute, ICADEP, and its women's organization, ONMPRI to conduct training activities for female activists, reflecting an advance in the mainstreaming of women's political participation and the inclusion of gender perspectives within traditional party structures. In 2012, ONMPRI and ICADEP again worked together to develop a training program for female activists, as well as to mainstream gender into all the activities of ICADEP. ONMPRI also planned to develop an online platform for distance learning to expand the reach of its training initiatives. Work with the PRD in 2012 also involved expanding women's access to training opportunities through a national training-of-trainers program that could reach PRD women across the country.

In 2013, NDI organized a two-day workshop on designing party training programs for indigenous women leaders, during which representatives of the PAN, PRI and PRD developed draft plans to train indigenous women in their parties and requested additional assistance on how to facilitate these programs. Following the workshop, a local group developed a proposal, based on the NDI methodology, for a political training academy for indigenous women from four communities in the state of Nayarit. The proposal was approved by the Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas (National Commission for Development of Indigenous Peoples, CDI), for implementation beginning in July 2013. The capacity of local groups to secure this independent funding indicates continued support for the political empowerment of women, critical to the sustainability of this training approach following the conclusion of all USAID-supported training activities for women political leaders in July 2013.

*Female candidates at the state and local levels received training.* The reach of the various training initiatives was vast. Approximately 500 women representing six registered parties

and nearly all of Mexico's 32 states participated in NDI workshops to build their skills as candidates in the 2010 elections. Information on how many of these women became candidates or were eventually elected was not tracked, however. The NDI team also directly trained women to run for local office through its Future Women Mayors' Academies.

The 2011 academy in Michoacán trained approximately 50 women, 14 of whom were selected as candidates: four mayoral candidates, five state legislature candidates, three city council candidates and two city attorney candidates. Six of these women were elected, including three mayors. A related impact of the academy was to bring more press and state party leadership attention to women's political representation. In oral and written evaluations of the course, participants indicated that more than 99 percent of the materials were useful. They also said they appreciated the selection and timing of topics. However, participants suggested that the modules, presented monthly, were not frequent enough and the materials, distributed in print and online, could have been offered on compact discs. In addition, the Future Women Mayors' Academy in Michoacán helped to foster networking among women from different political parties, forging working relationships that continued well after the academy's end.

In Morelos, the Future Women Mayors' Academy in 2011–2012 trained 38 women, of whom 31 completed at least four and a half of the six sessions. Thirteen women became candidates, of whom eight were elected: one mayor, five city council members and two city council substitutes. Another academy participant won election to the state legislature after successfully challenging her party's selection of a male candidate over her before the TEPJF. She directly attributed her success to the academy, which had informed her about her political rights and how she could challenge violations through the electoral court system. In addition, the outgoing state government pledged to establish a full-time training academy for women leaders in the state, but this has not yet been developed.

*Colloquia helped build consensus for reforms.* NDI sponsored a number of colloquia on women's leadership and political empowerment, leading to the creation of action plans and advocacy initiatives to enhance women's political participation. In September 2010, NDI co-sponsored an event for 250 women activists, elected officials and party leaders to discuss the role of political parties in cultivating women's leadership. NDI and INMUJERES then presented the action plans that resulted from the colloquium to congressional leaders. Proposals included further work with the 2 percent funding regulation, reform of the COFIPE to require candidate lists to be gender equal in relation to both titular and substitute candidates, and reforms to include more women in state governments and the federal judicial system.

In October 2012, 173 participants from political parties, civil society organizations, government, congress, electoral authorities, academia and international organizations attended a colloquium on democracy from a gender perspective. NDI and partners INMUJERES and the IFE used this occasion to present on the experience of the 2% y + Mujeres en Política campaign and share the recently produced guide with those in attendance (see more below).

In June 2013, 359 representatives of civil society organizations, political parties, the TEPJF, the gender and equity commissions of state legislatures, state women's agencies and federal government attended the "Initiative 6 x 60" forum. Participants hailed from 21 states and

the session on political equality reform was broadcast by Mexico's Congressional Channel and streamed live online. Participants produced 33 proposals related to constitutional reforms, as well as reforms to national and local electoral codes and laws regulating how public institutions operate. The Senate Gender and Equity Commission then agreed to incorporate 25 of these proposals into bills on five areas of federal legislative reform in the legislative session beginning in September 2013.

*The 2% campaign led to stronger regulations at national and state levels.* NDI's role in advancing the debate on women's political participation was perhaps most visible nationally, however, in its support to the 2% y + Mujeres en Política campaign, which clarified how political parties should — and should not — spend the public funding provided to them that is earmarked for the training and political development of women. Beginning in early 2010, with NDI technical assistance, several women's civil society organizations developed a joint strategy and strategic communications plan to address the need for better quota implementation and party spending regulations. Later that year, efforts to include women leaders from the PAN, PRI and PRD in the initiative took shape in roundtable discussions convened by NDI to address the use of party and federal funds intended to train, promote and develop women's political leadership. NDI continued to facilitate advocacy on this issue, marking the first time that IFE, TEPJF, all major parties, leading civic organizations and former elected officials had worked together.

In early 2011, with support from NDI, a multisectorial group of stakeholders developed a common proposal and designed a preliminary strategy to disseminate it, advocate for it with key decision-makers, and collect signatures to support it. By the spring, the informal group of stakeholders had become, with NDI support, a formal coalition: 2% y + Mujeres en Política. The coalition presented its proposal to reform the enforcement of the 2 percent regulation to IFE. With NDI's technical assistance, the coalition also began using new methods to advocate for its policy preferences, including the use of social media to generate social capital and pressure government officials. For example, the coalition sent a Twitter message targeting an IFE councilor who had publicly supported postponing deliberations on the 2 percent reform proposal. The councilor himself responded to these messages, indicating a change in his position. In the summer, the IFE Executive Council finally discussed and unanimously approved a new regulation to strengthen the auditing and transparency of party spending in general, and specifically of the use of the 2 percent earmarked for women's training, promotion and leadership development. Declarations of the IFE Executive Council president and two other councilors recognized the 2% movement's efforts during the proceedings. The reform package included the exact proposal developed by members of the 2% coalition.

At this stage, the 2% group began planning their next steps, including engaging with IFE's Accountability and Control Unit (Unidad de Fiscalización de los Recursos de los Partidos Políticos, or UFRPP) to develop specific indicators to help monitor party compliance, creating a toolkit for state-level activists with guidance on the step-by-step process used by the campaign, and redesigning a communications plan to position the reform and its impact for mainstream media and social media networks. In the fall, in response to a request from the UFRPP, NDI and 2% coalition members reviewed and provided feedback on the form that would be used to monitor and evaluate activities being claimed under the 2 percent funding; agreed to compile materials detailing best practices for political party training for women; and pledged to attend, as observers, a diploma course facilitated by the UFRPP on

gender mainstreaming. In early 2012, parties began to take steps to more systematically document their work plans and implement effective training programs for their female members. At a UFRPP event in February 2012, each registered party presented its annual work plan, which the UFRPP publicly certified. The UFRPP provided diplomas to officials from the gender, training and finance wings of the various parties who attended a course to develop their training programs from a gender perspective.

In October 2012, the 2% advocacy guide was presented at the aforementioned colloquium on democracy from a gender perspective. Following the presentation, women from political parties and civil society organizations in five states approached NDI to discuss presenting and distributing the guide in their states, expressing a need to implement similar advocacy processes at the state and local levels. In November, 104 participants attended a launch of the guide in Sinaloa, a state that had recently passed a law mandating that parties spend at least 5 percent of their state funds on activities promoting women's political participation — the highest percentage of any state in Mexico. At this event, the state electoral council president, Juliana Araujo, pledged to present a regulation to ensure that parties complied with this legislation. Participants developed an action plan to advocate for this fiscal oversight regulation, which was later achieved with the support of a coalition of local, civic, government and party representatives through a unanimous vote by the state electoral institute in Sinaloa. In December, 158 participants attended the launch of the guide in Puebla, an event that four daily newspapers covered. Participants decided to form a coalition and develop an action plan to advocate for an electoral reform to increase the gender quota for local candidates to 60 percent/40 percent and designate a percentage of party resources for women's training and leadership development. At that time, the state of Puebla had no laws regarding a funding requirement.

In early 2013, NDI launched the 2% guide in three further states in partnership — both financial and programmatic — with state institutions. In Quintana Roo, where the state women's institute offered to cover all costs associated with the event, 142 participants attended the launch. Participants developed a proposal and an action plan to advocate for a fiscal oversight regulation to improve compliance with the state's 2 percent regulation, and the state's electoral institute presented a first draft of it. In Veracruz, 101 people attended the launch and also developed a proposal and action plan for a fiscal oversight regulation for the state's 2 percent law. In Morelos, 80 participants attended the launch and developed an action plan to advocate for a fiscal oversight regulation to improve compliance with the state's new 2 percent requirement. A local news channel aired a feature on the event. In May, the coalition achieved its aims when the Morelos state electoral institute unanimously approved the new oversight regulation.

*In terms of more indirect results*, NDI local partner REAMM, which had been an active member of the original 2% coalition, applied for and won the Madeleine K. Albright grant in 2013. Through this grant, REAMM planned to conduct an initial launch and training activities on the 2% guide in four states, thereby further promoting the sustainability of the 2 percent initiative to the state level.

### Changes from the status quo

USAID-supported programming played a crucial role in the campaign to ensure greater oversight and compliance of the 2 percent party funding regulation, both at the federal level

and in the diffusion of this debate down to the state level. This process entailed fostering new as well as continuing alliances among actors in civil society, the political parties, and the state to work together on questions of women's leadership and political empowerment. As the 2% campaign developed, the opportunity to launch the guide at the subnational level enabled new actors to be drawn into the effort. In addition, certain state actors — especially in the IFE UFRPP unit — became more aware of the gender dimension of their work. After the training academies, more women were nominated and elected.

Mexico, as one respondent noted, no longer lacks a normative framework for women's political empowerment. Quotas for women in politics have firm legal roots within the Mexican political system, with party quotas and then 30 percent and 40 percent requirements in the electoral law giving way most recently to constitutional reform and new set of secondary laws mandating 50 percent or parity representation. In 2007–2008, the 2 percent earmark was inserted into the party funding regulation, most recently being raised to 3 percent in the new secondary laws governing elections. NDI contributed to these efforts by convening actors to ensure that these laws were properly implemented — clarifying, for example, how the 2 percent could be spent and raising awareness among female party members and state regulatory actors of the need to exercise greater oversight of the process. Together with the candidate training initiatives, these changes mean gender quotas are likely to work more effectively in future elections, as more women will be ready stand as candidates, making it more difficult for parties to evade the quota or subvert its purpose by selecting women close to party leaders who might otherwise lack interest or capacity to engage in politics.

### Best practices

According to many interviewees, NDI's role as convener and facilitator was crucial for building consensus and enabling the creation of a network in the early stages of the 2% campaign. Viewed as a neutral partner, NDI brought together people who otherwise might have been suspicious of one another, being from different parties or civil society organizations with sometimes conflicting ideologies. NDI also served as an intermediary between the 2% group and state institutions. As the national advocacy phase of the 2% campaign ended, NDI continued to help the group to look for new opportunities to monitor implementation of the new regulation, in addition to supporting the party gender secretariats to offer effective training programs for female leaders. At a celebration of IFE's decision to ratify the accountability recommendation, NDI took advantage of the opportunity to encourage local actors to take increased responsibility for day-to-day organization and maintenance of the group so it could be sustained beyond NDI's involvement.

In Mexico, NDI was also entrepreneurial in program design, funding and management, using partnerships with other organizations — state institutions, political parties and civil society — to maximize its resources. NDI leveraged resources from NDI's other donors, like the NED-supported “Making Democracy Deliver” activity, which enabled it to fill gaps that USAID funding could not provide, like training for newly elected women at the state and local levels in 2011 and 2013. NDI also engaged in extensive cost-sharing with Mexican institutions. These partnerships were fruitful in other ways as well, however. In its work with INMUJERES, for example, NDI was able to share the costs of its activities, but its involvement also enabled INMUJERES — which had been seen as a largely PAN-

dominated organization — become more politically inclusive by reaching out and engaging women from other parties. The relationship also strengthened NDI's ability to reach influential political leaders, position the issue of women's political participation in the media and identify national experts for activities. By working with INMUJERES, NDI reached many more female activists and candidates, satisfying a demand neither organization could have fulfilled alone.

Partnerships with the women's institutes in the states enabled advocacy on the 2 percent regulation to be stepped down to the subnational level. After the national launch of the guide in October 2012, NDI received requests from several states for support in replicating the advocacy process at the state level. However, NDI had resources to do state-level launches in only two states, Sinaloa and Puebla. NDI addressed this challenge by identifying local alliances that could help share the costs. In Quintana Roo, for example, the state electoral council covered all travel costs associated with launching the guide in the state. NDI also worked with partners from the 2% coalition in Mexico City to pursue other sources of funding for state-level advocacy efforts.

Another impact of the 2% campaign was to contribute to greater gender awareness inside state institutions, notably the IFE accounting unit. As the head of the unit explained, prior approaches to monitoring party expenses focused only on how much money was disbursed and whether sanctions for not spending needed to be imposed. Women from the 2% campaign, however, pressed him with further questions: What were the activities? What women benefitted from the trainings? Who supervised the impact of these activities and trainings? He recalled this meeting clearly, saying it had completely changed his point of view from looking only at the numbers to seeing the people and meanings behind them. His office resolved to serve as a model to the parties by producing clearer regulations for implementing the law.

NDI also maximized its work by replicating successful methodologies and sharing best practices between the federal, state and municipal levels. By adapting the concepts of a previously successful process to a different level of government, rather than developing something entirely new, NDI saved time and resources while using lessons learned to increase the impact of program activities. Though its partnerships, NDI could also transition more responsibility to local partners to increase program sustainability over time. One example is the Future Women Mayors' Academies, originally launched as a pilot program in Michoacán in partnership with INMUJERES and the state-level women's institute and electoral institute. To plan the curriculum, NDI and its partners conducted surveys and focus groups with municipal women activists from all parties and female former mayors to identify specific needs and requests. Following the pilot, NDI drew on participant evaluations and interviews to refine the curriculum for the following year's Morelos academy. This compendium of practical tools — which drew on training materials from NDI and others, including presentations, exercise and relevant readings — was shared with the women's wings of the major parties and circulated as an online resource for female activists across the country. Another example is the 2% guide, which drew upon the experience of the national 2% y + Mujeres en Política campaign and served as a toolkit for activists seeking to implement similar regulations in other states.



## Main Challenges

A variety of challenges arose among these various initiatives. One planned activity, the creation of a women's campaign finance network similar to EMILY's List in the United States never got off the ground. Several interviewees mentioned the lack of equitable resources for the campaigns of female candidates (compared to males), indicating an area in need of intervention. However, the local partner was unavailable and resources for this initiative ultimately went to other activities.

Another challenge was the lack of sufficient funding. With the resources available — less than \$1 million over three and a half years for all of the aforementioned activities — it was difficult for NDI to meet the demand for training and consultations for women at the state and municipal levels, even in partnership with national agencies like INMUJERES. While NDI maintains ongoing contact Future Women Mayors' Academies participants, the lack of funding — given that these academies were held near the end of the program — left no resources to follow-up with these women in the context of the USAID program. A related difficulty was adapting training curricula to the needs of women at the local level. To this end, NDI partnered with local nonprofit organizations and government agencies when conducting state and local activities.

While NDI was universally appreciated as providing a neutral space for different groups to come together, it also grappled with the competing agendas of different groups. For example, NDI's original civic partner, Mujeres al Poder, was open to collaborating with different political parties to improve enforcement of the 2 percent regulation, but was initially reluctant to reach out to other civil society groups for fear of losing control of the process. NDI encouraged its partner to adopt strategies for greater inclusion in the advocacy effort.

A key achievement of the 2% campaign was the new fiscal regulation, reflecting a major advance in CSOs' ability to influence government and party decision-making and to serve as watchdogs. However, after the reform's passage in July 2011, ensuring that momentum would not wane after the resolution's passage proved to be a challenge. Without ongoing technical assistance from NDI, the 2% coalition was at risk of not continuing its activities, given that it was a loose-knit group of activists without any full- or part-time staff, limiting the ability of the group on its own to implement specific programs or strategies. For this reason, NDI worked to ensure that members assumed the leadership role that to date had been played by NDI — delegating more of the day-to-day organization to the members, in the hope of fostering sustainability.

On the other hand, the existence of the regulation at the federal level is only a first step. It not only needs to be stepped down to the subnational level, a process that NDI supported in some but not in all states, but it also needs to be respected by political parties federally. Parties retain discretion in deciding how — and, indeed, if — the money would be spent on activities that would in fact enhance women's leadership capacities, leading to nomination and election to positions of political power. According to the head of the IFE accounting unit, several parties inquired as to what penalty would be imposed if they did not use the funds for this purpose. Women in at least one party's gender secretariat reported that they were not able to find out from their party where some of the funds had gone. They also expressed frustration that training events planned months in advance had to be cancelled at

the last minute, due to refusal from the central party to provide funding. Further, as an NDI staff member pointed out, the requirement that parties present annual workplans is not enough, at least in the short-run, given that the next federal elections will take place in 2015.

A different type of challenge was rooted in NDI's work with the political parties over the life of the program, related to different aspects of the electoral cycle. In the lead up to the 2012 elections, key staff members in the gender secretariats of the three major parties were working on their parties' election campaigns, making them unavailable to participate in NDI events. After the elections, there was turnover in party positions, with many key contacts in the women's wing and training institutes leaving for new positions. This required NDI to reach out to the new leaders to explain programs and seek their buy-in for activities. At the same time, advocacy efforts by NDI's civic partners were also hampered by increasing political polarization in the lead up to the 2012 federal elections.

Political differences also hamper cooperation among elected women after they assume office, although these dynamics may vary over time and across assemblies. In the current Congress, numerous sources said, female senators enjoy excellent working relationships across the three major parties but female deputies collaborate less than in previous sessions, and collaboration is also down between deputies and senators. As a result, NDI had fewer allies in the Chamber of Deputies than prior to 2012 and women across the two houses of Congress do not share a strong dynamic. One example of this lack of cooperation is the status of a bill addressing political violence against women. This issue came up in numerous interviews as a problem affecting women's full political empowerment in Mexico, especially at the municipal level, given that acts of physical and psychological aggression can hinder women from standing as candidates, or lead them to drop out of politics after winning election. The draft legislation was approved in the Senate in 2013 as an amendment to existing legislation on violence against women. In the Chamber of Deputies, there has been little effort to push it through the legislative process, although some deputies, senators and staff remain hopeful.

## **Other Programs or Initiatives**

Funding from the NED enabled NDI to partner with INMUJERES in late 2011 to train 30 recently-elected women on skills to better govern at the local level. In March 2013, NDI and INMUJERES convened a second seminar with 30 women, including five participants from the Future Women Mayors' Academy in Morelos, on helping democracy deliver results for citizens and strengthening women's leadership at the local level. The ability to leverage this support was important, as timing and funding issues prevented NDI from using USAID funds to train the women who were elected following their participation in the Future Women Mayors' Academies. However, an NDI staff member pointed out that this NED-funded training did not occur until the women had been in office for one year; the elected women noted that they would have liked to have received the training at the beginning of their terms. Other participants in the Future Women Mayors' Academies in Michoacán and Morelos who won election received, with their male counterparts, some training from the Instituto Nacional para el Federalismo y el Desarrollo Municipal (INAFED), but it was basic training in municipal administration and budgets. What was missing, an NDI staff member said, was an introduction to the political skills needed to function effectively as an elected



official, like negotiation, consensus building, implementing participatory processes and using technology.

In terms of sustainability, the institutional context has changed since these programs were developed, in part due to NDI's involvement. Gender parity is enshrined in the federal constitution and secondary legislation, mandating that equal numbers of women and men be proposed as candidates. The legislation, significantly, requires that parties alter their statutes to incorporate the principle of gender parity and that state governments pass and implement similar reforms. The 2 percent funding earmark is accompanied by clearer rules for its application and campaigns to ensure that similar state-level regulations have made some gains. These changes provide crucial tools for women to claim their political rights. Nonetheless, as numerous interviewees pointed out, ensuring the correct implementation of these laws remains a challenge and will require ongoing oversight to ensure that they translate into greater opportunities for women in politics, even if the new laws establish that parties may not place female candidates exclusively in losing districts. Other initiatives will be required to prevent political parties from nominating women — like female relatives with no interest or experience in politics — whose presence may undermine the spirit of these reforms by not opening up politics to a broader range of women.

## **Continuing Work by USAID**

The original CEPPS program, of which these activities were part, was to run from Oct. 1, 2009, to Sept. 30, 2012, with an original budget of \$2 million, with \$1 million to IRI and \$1 million to NDI. In 2012, USAID provided a cost extension through July 31, 2013, increasing the total award to \$3.4 million with the new funds split evenly between IRI and NDI. With this modification to the award, NDI was asked to gradually phase out work under its original scope, including the women's leadership activities, and add two new program objectives: 1) increase access of citizens in Baja California and Chihuahua to substantive information on citizen security and justice reform issues, and 2) enhance the knowledge and technical skills of candidates and elected officials in Baja California and Chihuahua to engage citizens on security and justice reform before and following elections. The final women's participation activity, the 6 x 60 initiative, was held in June 2013. This topic was not included in the subsequent cost extension of \$3 million for the program to continue through Aug. 1, 2016.

The shift away from activities to promote women's leadership and political empowerment had little to do with the importance of the topic or the effectiveness of NDI interventions. USAID/Mexico staff noted that the NDI program had been successful, with three key achievements: the new parity reforms, the enhanced regulation of the 2 percent provision and the Future Women Mayors' Academies, which local actors are replicating. A move to Merida funding, they explained, primarily motivated the change in focus. The Merida Initiative is a strategy for regional security cooperation between Mexico and the United States, under which U.S. programs support strengthened rule of law, human rights protections and community-based initiatives to mitigate the impact of crime and violence. Programming is concentrated in priority areas, including border states. Mission management questioned the need for CEPPS as an implementing partner, given its traditional focus on elections and political processes, rather than rule of law and human rights programming.

USAID/Mexico technical office staff, however, felt that NDI and IRI could still make a useful contribution by facilitating dialogue among CSOs, political parties and state institutions on rule of law and human rights issues. As such, the CEPPS program objectives changed in 2013 to include: 1) building civil society capacity to influence public policy and advance criminal justice, crime prevention and human rights reform; 2) strengthening local officials' capacity to effectively engage and collaborate with civil society to design and implement public policy; and 3) enhancing communication among federal government, political bodies, crime prevention and human rights organizations.

The geographical focus of NDI and IRI's work shifted to the states of Baja California, Chihuahua, Nuevo León and Hidalgo. USAID/Mexico is discussing with NDI how to better incorporate gender into the new program scope in areas like women's access to justice and gender-based violence. In the meantime, NDI and IRI continue to collect sex-disaggregated data on program participation. IRI's director also pointed out that, while they have not been providing technical assistance on gender per se, much of the focus of IRI's work in the state of Nuevo León touches on gender and criminal justice, as well as violence against women, a focus that emerged organically from their work on crime and violence.

While agreeing that women's political leadership and empowerment remains important, USAID/Mexico technical office staff said international support is no longer needed, given that local and national organizations are strong and have assumed full ownership of the issue. At the final meeting, however, the problem of political violence against women was raised as an area where USAID/Mexico could make a real contribution, given intersections between this topic and the focus of the Merida Initiative.

## **V. WOMEN'S POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT BENCHMARKS**

### **Influential Institutions**

Influential political institutions in Mexico include the president, Cabinet and governors in the executive branch; the Senate and Chamber of Deputies in the legislative branch; and the Supreme Court and Electoral Tribunal in the judicial branch. Other important government institutions include the military and the police. Women's presence across government institutions is uneven. The highest proportion of women is in the legislative branch, the only sector subject to gender quota legislation.

Little information is available on the types of women who hold these positions. While some anecdotal evidence suggests that some who achieve higher positions in Mexico come from political families or are close to top leaders, many men come to these positions of power this way as well. Many women achieving leadership positions likely come from elite sectors of society. Controversies over the political role of women in communities governed by "usos y costumbres" means the participation of indigenous women may be further discouraged.

In the executive branch, voters elected a man, Enrique Peña Nieto, as president in 2012. In 2014, women constituted 17.6 percent of Cabinet ministers and 16.3 percent of top

technocrats. Female mayors led two of the 10 largest cities,<sup>33</sup> León and Monterrey. Following the July 2012 elections, however, no women served as governors and only 6.8 percent of all mayors were women. Many interviewees mentioned the percentage of female mayors, highlighting that local-level positions of executive power were particularly inaccessible to women, in part because they remain outside the scope of existing quota legislation. The relative absence of women from these leadership positions was a key motivation behind the Future Women Mayors Academies organized by NDI in Michoacán and Morelos. As noted, four women who participated in the activities were ultimately elected as mayors in these two states.

In the legislative branch, for the first time in the country's history, women hold more than 30 percent of all seats in both houses of Congress: 37.4 percent of the Chamber of Deputies and 34.4 percent of the Senate. However, this increased presence has not translated into a proportional rise in the number of female committee chairs in each house. Women preside over 23.2 percent of the standing committees in the Chamber of Deputies and 29.7 percent of the committees in the Senate. Notably, women chair 57.1 percent of the committees linked to study centers in the Chamber, but only 25 percent of those in the Senate. Women do not lead any of the political parties represented in Congress, however. These patterns suggest that gender quotas have played an important role in enhancing women's access to legislative positions, but have not opened opportunities for women in higher leadership positions.

In the judicial branch, 22.2 percent of the judges in the Supreme Court and 14.3 percent of the judges in the Electoral Tribunal are women. These numbers are more or less mirrored at lower levels of the court system: Women constituted 17.6 percent of circuit magistrates and 24 percent of district judges in 2012. At the municipal level in 2012, 17 percent of judges were women. According to EQUIS, a Mexican organization working on women's justice, 51 percent of employees in the federal court system are women, but only 5 percent are judges or magistrates. However, important regional differences exist. In the state of Yucatan, for example, more women than men are judges.

The security sector, in contrast, is much less feminized. Military data from 2013 reveals that women now make up 5.8 percent of all personnel in the army and air force. Although men are subject to mandatory military service, women became able to serve voluntarily beginning in 2000. The numbers of women joining the military have grown substantially in recent years, nearly doubling between 2006 and 2013 from 6,309 to 12,345 female recruits. A key driver is a 2007 decree on gender equality in the armed forces, which opened up 17 of the 39 branches of military education to women, including military engineering and aviation. Nonetheless, more than half of the women serving — 54.9 percent — occupy the two lowest ranks of soldado and cabo, while only one woman holds one of the top three ranks of general. Yet, when compared to men, the largest share of women is at the middle ranks of mayor and capitán 1, at 15 percent and 11 percent of these ranks respectively. In other positions, the proportion of women ranges from zero to 9 percent (CEAMEG 2014). In comparison, women constitute 16 percent of the navy and 21 percent of naval officers, with the highest-ranked woman holding the rank of rear admiral. Women form 15 percent of the

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<sup>33</sup> The 10 largest cities are Mexico City, Ecatepec, Guadalajara, Puebla, León, Juárez, Tijuana, Zapopán, Monterrey and Nezahualcoyotl

police force, and the first female police commissioner was appointed in 2012 and served until 2014.

## Support from Male Allies

A handful of men in these institutions have been allies.<sup>34</sup> Their role has been vital, given the positions that they have occupied. Interviewees repeatedly mentioned President Peña Nieto as a key force behind the recent parity reforms. His decision to propose an amendment to the Mexican Constitution in October 2013 advanced the process to mandate parity in the Constitution, as well as to increase the quota to 50 percent in the package of reforms to the electoral law. Few interviewees felt this decision came from a principled commitment to empower women; most thought the celebration of the 60th anniversary of women's right to vote presented a window of opportunity for him to present himself as a champion of women. Nevertheless, his action helped advance parity, a reform various women had pursued in state institutions, parties and civil society in previous years.

Within the two houses of Congress, few interviewees could identify any individual male allies. No members of the gender equality commissions in either the Chamber of Deputies or the Senate are men. Yet parity reforms passed nearly unanimously in both houses. Several interviewees indicated at least two reasons for this. The first is that, while men may not propose legislation on women's issues, they often vote for such bills on the floor, in part due to the perceived negative optics of voting against them. This pattern is consistent with other countries, where women often play a disproportionate role in writing and lobbying for bills on women's rights, but men and women are equally likely to vote such bills into law (Tamerius, 1995). A second reason is that party discipline is strong in Mexico. Although there is no consecutive re-election — a rule that will change with the 2018 elections as a result of recent reforms — elected officials typically move from one position to the next, running for a state or municipal office, for example, or for a position in the other house of Congress. This means they are highly reliant on their party for their political future. One party insider confessed that the majority of her party delegation had voted among themselves to oppose the parity provision, but the party whip negated this and required them to vote in favor of the bill.

Within IFE, a clear male ally was Alfredo Cristalinas, head of the UFRPP, who worked with the 2% coalition. He voiced public support for the new regulation governing party expenditures in women's leadership training and political development. He also led efforts to better integrate a gender perspective into the work and working environment of his own unit.

Prior to the 2012 elections, the judges within the TEPJF — nearly all male — played a crucial role through their historical decision interpreting the 40 percent quota law to allow no exceptions by mode of candidate selection, requiring each sex to constitute at least 40 percent of candidates in both components of the electoral system, with each candidate's alternative being the same sex. Although one male IFE councilor sent some conflicting messages to the political parties, this interpretation stood, with the parties having to scramble to change their lists over a weekend to include the requisite number of women.

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<sup>34</sup> Several interviewees also mentioned male academics as important allies outside formal institutions.

This forced the parties to delist a number of male candidates who had been announced as candidates, including some who had created campaign propaganda. Several of these men launched challenges with the TEPJF, which rejected all of their cases.

## **Glass Ceilings**

Women hold a growing number of positions of power, especially in the legislative branch. This greater presence has opened opportunities for women to advance to leadership roles in both houses of Congress, although their share of these posts is lower than the overall proportion of women in both chambers. As in other countries, women tend to be concentrated in committees focusing on issues like gender equality, health, children and other vulnerable populations. Some female politicians, however, are making a concerted effort to take up roles in more traditionally masculine committees, like foreign affairs, to promote the mainstreaming of gender concerns across Congress. In the executive branch, several women have run for president. The most viable candidate, Josefina Vázquez Mota, ran as the candidate for the PAN in 2012. Her candidacy inspired many women, according to women inside her political party, but she eventually came in third with 25.4 percent of the vote, compared to 31.6 percent for second-place finisher Andrés Manuel López Obrador (PRD) and 38.2 percent for current President Enrique Peña Nieto (PRI).

As noted, gender quota rules have facilitated women's access to legislative positions, especially as the ceiling has risen over the years and the interpretation of the regulation has reduced gaps and loopholes. Awareness of the power of affirmative action led the INE (formerly the IFE) to restrict this year's competition for positions in the national electoral service to only female candidates, with the goal of increasing the share of women to 25 percent. This decision proved controversial, however; several male candidates challenged it with the TEPJF. Despite the lack of precedent, either in Mexico or abroad, the competition ultimately was allowed to be restricted to female candidates this year, with no decision on whether this approach will be repeated. The lack of clarity in the new secondary laws concerning women's participation in the national and state electoral institutes remains a concern, with Mujeres en Plural formally approaching the TEPJF and INE for clarity on the issue.

## **Informal Power**

The primary locus of informal power is the political parties, whose candidates ultimately govern in both the executive and legislative branches. Various interviewees pointed out that older men lead these parties and are not sympathetic to women's political empowerment — tending to view it in “zero-sum” and not “win-win” terms. Younger men are somewhat more open to women's participation. One interviewee noted that judges are, in theory, nominated via competitive processes, but in practice nominations are often linked to political parties, particularly at the state and local levels. There is also a question as to who controls the political parties. Members of the press have suggested some of the bills passed favor the interests of large corporations. Others allude to collusion between drug cartels and all three branches of government and the major political parties.

## Women's Role in Informal Institutions

A few prominent female philanthropists head prestigious foundations, and women lead some CSOs focused on issues like human rights and law reinforcement. Some well-known female journalists — including Carmen Aristegui, Lidia Cacho, Denise Dresser and Marta Lamas — are highly regarded opinion leaders.

## Women's Impact in Formal Institutions

In Mexico, the proportion of women is greatest in legislative institutions, which is the branch of government where their impact is also the most evident to track. Some policy gains mentioned in the interviews include the *Ley General Para la Igualdad entre Mujeres y Hombres* (Law for Equality Between Women and Men), passed in 2006 but updated in 2011, 2012 and 2013, and the *Ley General de Acceso de las Mujeres a una Vida Libre de Violencia* (Law on Women's Access to a Life Free from Violence), passed in 2007 but updated in 2009, 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014. The latter includes the crime of “feminicide” (*feminicidio*), a concept closely associated with the large number of women's murders in Ciudad Juárez; a legislative commission on this problem continues to work on this issue. Various interviewees also pointed to gender quota laws, attributing their passage in 2002 and increases in 2007 and 2014 to cross-party alliances among female senators and deputies, often working behind the scenes to cultivate support for the measures among their male colleagues prior to the public votes. One ex-deputy described the cohort of women in her legislature as operating like an informal women's caucus on this and other issues. Another pointed out that, while women form a minority of legislators, the fact that they now constitute a larger minority of more than 30 percent in both houses was significant in the latest round of electoral reforms. The constitutional changes required to pursue these reforms needed approval by a two-thirds vote in both chambers; women apparently leveraged the weight of their numbers to ensure that gender parity remained in the reform package during negotiations among legislators. One interviewee noted that in the 2012–2015 legislature, the five senators who have introduced the most legislation are women.

However, interviewees also emphasized that the presence of women in legislative institutions did not necessarily mean women would experience policy gains more generally. While one interviewee noted that when more women have seats in institutions, they tend to support the proposals made by other women, another opined that women learn to function within institutions rather than change the institutions themselves. Some observed that cooperation among women had varied across legislative sessions, as well as within the two houses. Female deputies worked together fruitfully across party lines on a variety of topics in the 2006–2009 session, whereas less collaboration was evident in more recent legislatures. In contrast, the cohort of women in the current Senate is known for working across party lines, with women in the PRI, PAN and PRD joining together openly on certain policy initiatives. This points to the importance of the crop of individual women elected to any given legislature, in relation to both their own commitment to women's issues and their willingness and ability to work together on issues of common concern. The lack of this dynamic among female deputies in the current legislature is unfortunate, given the institutional support for women's legislative work in the Chamber of Deputies in the form of the *Centro de Estudios para el Adelanto de las Mujeres y la Equidad de Género* (Study Center for the Advancement of Women and Gender Equality, CEAMEG). An interview with a staff member from the



Senate's Gender Equality Commission, however, noted that office's practice of reviewing all Senate bills from a gender perspective and ensuring that they were assigned, as appropriate, for their committee to consider or provide input. She noted that a female senator successfully lobbied to create a lactation room, making the Senate a more woman-friendly workplace.

Interviewees made several suggestions on fostering greater incorporation of a gender perspective in legislation. One was to provide gender training to politicians, both male and female. An academic involved in administering the master's program on gender and public policy at FLACSO mentioned that few politicians at the federal level have time to do the coursework. However, a party member who had taken the course said it completely altered her view of politics, both in terms of how to navigate politics and to what end. She said the course gave her the tools of gender analysis, inspired her to pursue collaboration with other women and encouraged her to promote a gender equality agenda. A second suggestion was to make female politicians more aware of the resources available to them, including the existence of CEAMEG in the Chamber of Deputies. Although CEAMEG staff invites all female deputies to an introduction session at the beginning of each legislature, many do not attend — and some report not knowing this resource existed. Some expressed hope that if more women are elected in 2015, following implementation of the parity principle, they might have more opportunities to pursue initiatives like a women's caucus. The latter might be an initiative that could be supported through donor funding, as the practical issues of establishing women's caucuses are now receiving growing attention internationally.<sup>35</sup>

## Symbolic Impacts

A common feeling expressed across many interviews was that quotas are symbolically important. As a result of quotas, citizens see many more women in political office, eroding traditional associations between women with the private sphere and men with the public sphere. This can profoundly alter what citizens think about traditional gender roles. Nonetheless, the use of quotas as a fast-track measure to empower women in politics appears to have inspired a backlash in the form of political violence against women. Nearly every interviewee alluded to this phenomenon in the discussion. It is not clear, however, if this problem is on the rise because there are more women in political positions or if such behaviors are reported more now because the debate on women in politics has shifted in recent years. This type of violence appears to be most prominent at the local level, where it is less subject to the reach of federal regulation and oversight.

The debate over quotas is also indicative of symbolic progress over the years. Few politicians, male or female, would openly oppose gender equality today. Of two men who opposed parity reforms in the Senate, for example, one reportedly said he was proud to vote against it because he felt it was demeaning to women; he attempted to use gender equality language to justify his position, acknowledging how much the discourse has permeated the political establishment. Another example is the case in which the whip allegedly rejected the vote by the party's congressional delegation to oppose gender parity, simply saying, the interviewee reported, that it could not be done. He appeared to think that would damage the party's reputation.

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<sup>35</sup> See for example <http://www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/caucus-e.pdf>

Evidence collected for this report is not sufficient to indicate how citizens respond to the cue of gender quotas in their attitudes toward government or their levels of political engagement. Other studies have attempted to answer this question but have not found much impact when using public opinion data (Zetterberg, 2009; 2012). Part of the problem may stem from lack of awareness that quotas for women exist. The need to recruit an unprecedented number of women in the next federal election, as well as in upcoming state and municipal elections, once requisite state laws have passed, may enhance this awareness — in turn producing any attitude and behavior changes.

Still, many interviewees were sure that parties would seek ways to avoid or undermine gender quota requirements, as well as the 3 percent party funding mandate. The issue remains contested, some interviewees suggested, because adding more women entails reducing the number of men, as a mathematical necessity. Resistance to change is to be expected, complicating the path to women's leadership and political empowerment.

## VI. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR USAID PROGRAMMING

*Replicate the role of convener and facilitator.* Across the large number of interviews conducted for this evaluation, it became apparent that the many different actors engaged in efforts to promote women's leadership and political empowerment in Mexico universally appreciated NDI's role as the implementing organization for USAID funding. Above all, as many interviewees reported, NDI served as a crucial convener and facilitator of networks and the exchanges of idea and strategies among diverse actors who would not otherwise have come together. This is because, as an outside agency, NDI was seen as a neutral in its orientation, not favoring one political party over another. Therefore, many doubted that cross-party mobilization, which was crucial for the success of many of the initiatives outlined previously, would have been possible without the NDI's participation.

*Leverage other resources to stretch the program budget.* Playing the role of convener and facilitator provided a space for local actors to brainstorm and build alliances for change, drawing in country-specific expertise and enabling genuine partnerships among local actors. The NDI office also took advantage of other donor funding, most notably from the NED, UNDP and UN Women, and funds available from Mexican institutions like the Senate, Chamber of Deputies and INMUJERES to co-organize colloquia, create the 2% guide, and carry out the Future Women Mayors' Academies. This approach permitted the modest USAID funding to go much further as a result.

*Design activities to meet the needs of women at the pre-election, election and post-election phases of the electoral cycle.* In relation to the timing and duration of activities, NDI staff suggested that programs last at least three years, with approximately 60 percent of funding/activities conducted prior to the election and 40 percent afterward. Programming should also be planned better at the design phase to ensure that programs cover both pre- and post-election phases, with adequate resources to do both. Despite being part of the original grant, sufficient funds were not available for plans to work with newly elected women, a fact which was definitely seen as shortcoming.



*Address the issue of political finance and fundraising for female candidates.* Several interviewees mentioned lack of access to financial resources as a key barrier that inhibits women from running for office. This was part of NDI's original workplan, but work in this area did not ultimately get off the ground. One possibility would be to look at programs worldwide that have successfully integrated fundraising into the program approach and identify best practices to replicate in future designs.

*Strategize for sustainability of program initiatives.* The sustainability of program goals should be considered from the design phase. The NDI program used several techniques that contributed to sustainability of its initiatives, including working with governmental and civil society partners to successfully adapt and replicate a national-level campaign (the 2% campaign) in the states; assisting local actors like REAMM to apply for funding to continue these efforts; and working with parties (and in particular with PAN) to build their internal capacity for candidate and leadership training. All of this work enabled momentum to outlive the NDI program. As a result, local partners have the tools to continue with this work, even though NDI's USAID-funded activities on women's leadership and political empowerment have ended. This outcome should be a goal from the start.

*Foster the creation of women's networks at all levels of politics.* According to several interviewees, networking among women in political parties and civil society was critical for advancing the parity reforms and improved enforcement of the 2 percent regulation. Networking, including mentoring programs, among women could and should be a goal at a variety of levels: within political parties; across political parties; within legislatures, as in a women's caucus; among local elected officials; and across politics, civil society and academia. A best practice in this sense is the Mujeres en Plural network, which recognizes and seeks to bridge differences among women to pursue common goals.

*Remain engaged on the ground in Mexico.* Several interviewees viewed the involvement of NDI as crucial for helping translate the recent parity reforms into reality. One interviewee said INMUJERES and civil society groups alone could not build up a pool of qualified female leaders and candidates. Another referred to NDI as the glue that could continue to bring actors together, due to the perception that it was a neutral convener. The fact that so many of the interviewees brought up political violence against women suggests that this might be an issue that could fall under the scope of priorities of Merida funding, given its focus on human rights and security, and fill a critical new need necessary for women's political empowerment.

*Incorporate a specific unit on defending political rights in training programs.* In Mexico, as in several other Latin American countries, the electoral court system enables citizens to challenge discriminatory practices inside the political parties. Including this information in training programs for female political leaders and candidates is therefore crucial. One interviewee who had participated in one of the Future Women Mayors' Academies explicitly said she was able to stand as a candidate because she had learned about this process at one of her trainings. She successfully challenged the illegal actions of her party, becoming the rightful candidate and eventually winning election. This training should include information on how to file a case with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, which has considered cases related to gender quota violations from other countries. This commission

may provide an outlet for challenging political violence against women, should a Mexican law to this effect not be passed or implemented fully.

*Expand the scope and reach of gender training exercises to include a broader range of actors.*

Elected politicians — both male and female — should receive gender training. This can contribute to the goals of gender mainstreaming, both in donor programming and in the design of public policies. Reaching out to men and women will ensure that initiatives for gender equality become everyone's responsibility and are viewed as achieving the broader good, not simply added benefits for women. This training should also be provided to USAID DRG and Program Officers, to encourage gender integration in donor programming. It might also be extended to CSOs and implementing partners who request it. More widely available gender training can go hand-in-hand with improving the collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated quantitative data and gender-sensitive qualitative data.

*Work to strengthen the capacities of civil society organizers.* Paying attention to women who are politically active in civil society is complementary to empowering women in elected positions. According to IRI, women lead many CSOs in Mexico. However, civil society is weak in some states. Future programs on women's leadership and political empowerment could pursue multiple objectives simultaneously by working to strengthen the capacities of civil society organizers. These activities could expand work and awareness on the pressing issue of political violence against women, a growing problem that lacks a state-level policy response.

## ANNEX I: INTERVIEWS

Katy Mudge and Melanie Pitkin (NDI Washington), April 29, 2014

Elizabeth Ramirez and Cecilia Real (USAID/Mexico), May 19, 2014

Patricio Gajardo (IRI country director), May 19, 2014

Laura López (Red de Apoyo a Mujeres Municipalistas; 2% y + Mujeres), May 20, 2014

Guadalupe Suárez (PAN, PPM women's organization), May 20, 2014

Diva Gastélum (PRI, Presidente of Comisión Igualdad de Género, Senado), May 21, 2014

Lucía Carrillo (PAN, previous head of training for PPM), May 21, 2014

Ayesha Borja (Staff member of Comisión Igualdad de Género, Senado), May 21, 2014

Keila González (NDI country director), May 22, 2014

Tere Hevia (consultant, INMUJERES Citizen Council, 2% y + Mujeres), May 22, 2014

Angélica de la Peña (PRD, Senator, ex-Deputy), May 22, 2014

Mónica Zárate (Liderazgo con Equidad, 2% movement), May 23, 2014

Enrique Davis (former PRI training director, 2% contact group), May 23, 2014

Flor Desirée and others (CSOs, 2% and Future Women Mayors Academy), May 26, 2014

María Teresa Domínguez (state deputy, Future Women Mayors Academy), May 26, 2014

Briseida García (IEE in Morelos, electoral councilor), May 26, 2014

María Paula Castañeda (ex-Equis), May 27, 2014

Alfredo Cristalinas (INE accounting unit), May 27, 2014

Santiago Nieto (UNAM, former TEPJF), May 27, 2014

Paula Soto (INMUJERES), May 28, 2014

Marta Subiñas (FLACSO, MA in Gender and Public Policy), May 28, 2014

Cecilia Real (USAID/Mexico), May 29, 2014

Maricela Contreras (ex-Diputy, ex-President of Comisión Igualdad de Género) May 29, 2014

Melissa Guerra (head of INE Gender Unit), May 29, 2014

Martha Tagle (Convergencia, ex-Deputy, Red Mujeres en Plural), May 30, 2014

Araceli García Rico (PRI candidate, now INDESOL Gender Unit), May 30, 2014

## ANNEX II: REFERENCES

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