

## **Consolidated response on how to promote gender equity within a political party**

**Question:** *I am interested in making a proposal for a gender equality policy to my party (PINU-Social Demócrata). I would like information about experiences and expert opinions in this area.* Ana Ortega, Honduras.

We have prepared the following consolidated response based on the responses received from our experts and complementary research by the iKNOW Politics team:

### **Gender equality policy**

A gender equality policy means more than including references to the subject in official party documents or increasing the proportion of women who participate in the party as active members or leaders. As noted in the “Strategic Plan for the Implementation of Gender Equality Policies” in the Partido Democrático Somos Perú, a policy of this sort implies *keeping in mind the particular situation faced by men and women in different spheres of life — social, political, economic and cultural — to guide their efforts to eliminate all forms of discrimination and exclusion.* It means *making equality a work area for the entire Party and a goal of all of its activities,* in the words of the Partido Socialista Español, PSOE (PSOE, 2002, p.1).

This means preparing a plan of diverse, complementary, interrelated strategies over a period of time, which are reflected in actions that are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-based.

## Developing a policy

### 1. Assessment

The first step in preparing a gender policy is an investigation of the status of gender equality within a political party. This may include examining existing documents and rules governing the functioning of the party, its policies and manifesto commitments, and examining the situation of women within the party. It is important to assess the composition of office holders within the party.

For this assessment, which should be as participatory as possible, questions may focus on certain areas, as suggested by María Emma Wills (Colombia) and Beatriz Llanos (see accompanying box).

There is a great deal of literature about gender analysis, and it probably will not be difficult to find people inside or outside the party who are familiar with it and can help develop a simple guide for doing a rapid assessment in this area. Aspects that seem insignificant, such

#### Questions for a gender assessment

Dear Ana:

I applaud your interest in developing a gender-equity proposal for your organization. To develop such a proposal, however, it is crucial that you first do a brief assessment of the party's openness to the inclusion of women. Only when you know the starting point will you have a clear idea of the type of measures that must be implemented in your party and the strategies you will need to use to win their adoption and implementation.

Along this line, I think a concept developed by the Colombian researcher María Emma Wills is very useful. She measured the degree of Colombian parties' "friendliness or indifference" to the inclusion of women. To determine whether a party is friendly (committed to, receptive to or inclined to promote inclusion), she suggests observing/analyzing five aspects of the party's activity:

- Doctrinal positions: Has your party included provisions in its by-laws or government plans that expressly recognize the need to adopt measures to promote gender equity?
- Internal structures: Does your party have quotas for women in leadership positions or a women's section or equality section?
- Policies adopted by parties: Are there specific actions for recruiting women, training activities targeting women, or funds allocated for promoting women's participation?
- Electoral practices: Have quotas for the inclusion of women on candidate lists been adopted, and are they met? What percentage of candidates put forward by your party for election are women?
- Public policies: Are elected officials and authorities from your party committed to promoting gender equity and incorporating this concept into the government actions that they promote or implement?

I think that if you apply these questions to your organization, you will get an initial idea of how committed your party currently is to promoting gender equity.

With regard to the measures you could propose, I would like to note that in May, International IDEA will publish, "From word to deed: Good practices for women's participation in Latin American political parties," a manual in which you will find a total of 95 experiences from parties in 18 Latin American countries, and which also includes national studies of the situation of women's political participation in these countries, including Honduras (you will also be able to read the analysis by María Emma Wills, which I mentioned above, about parties' friendliness or hostility).

These good practices involve 11 "institutional areas" into which we have grouped party activities:

- By-laws and declarations of principles
- Internal organization
- Recruitment
- Elections and leadership promotion
- Training
- Electoral system reforms
- Financing
- Government plans
- Inter-party consensus building
- Relations with civil society
- The media

as the time of day when party activities are held, are extremely important in promoting or discouraging women's participation.

## 2. Building a critical mass for change

Along with the assessment, it is crucial to develop a *critical mass* for promoting the desired change. Obviously, the main source of recruitment for this is from among women who are already in the party. That, however, is insufficient.

Jorge Valladares (*Expert Opinion*, 2008) reminds us that *a party is an organization with central leadership, whose leaders tend to reduce internal competition and whose essence is to compete in elections for positions of power. It is therefore indispensable to involve those who make up the elite (at any level), because otherwise they could become irrelevant. It is true that the elite are usually male, which is even more reason: a very common error is to exclude men from projects that seek to promote women.*

The Scandinavian social democrat parties were the first to establish women's sections and make equity proposals (Norway in 1912, Sweden in 1920). It could be useful to establish relationships with parties in the Latin American region and the world to exchange valuable information from them about the ways in which they have promoted gender equity. To identify possible interlocutors in the region, it is advisable to consult the manual, "From word to deed: Good practices for women's participation in Latin American political parties."

While gender equity is a value in itself, to reinforce the argument within the party it is important to include strategic considerations: What will the party gain by implementing and promoting it? This means analyzing both the socio-political situation in Honduras and the political system itself. With regard to the former, the analysis must identify the pending equity agenda in Honduran society, as well as the as-yet-undeveloped potential for mobilizing women that could be unleashed by a party that puts this issue on its agenda. With regard to the second point, the conclusion of one recent study (Martínez in Various authors,

2008, p. 24) notes: *In Honduras, progress has been made in electoral regulation in general and women's participation in particular. But this progress is inadequate if there is no effective enforcement or force capable of demanding implementation of the law.* A party that takes gender equity seriously has an enormous opportunity in this context: to spearhead the effort to bring about historic change in the Honduran political system.

A good example of the strategic effect of progress in gender equity is offered by the Concertación parties in Chile and the Alternativa por una República de Iguales (ARI) in Argentina. In the case of the former, it is not an accident that women (Michelle Bachelet and Soledad Alvear) have been the leaders of renovation processes within their parties, giving them new impetus for electoral victory after several terms in office. As various analysts have noted, one of the main factors in Bachelet's victory was the inclusion of key elements of the gender agenda in her platform (Gerber, 2008). In the case of ARI, there has been a notable advance in election results, not only because of the presidential candidacy of Elisa Carrió (2003), but also because of increased gender parity within the party, to the point that today about 60 percent of party leaders are women. This and other good practices make ARI stand out in the study of Argentina in the manual mentioned above (Marx and Borner, in Various authors, 2008, p. 18).

### **Concrete Steps**

The next sections elaborate on steps that should be taken to make progress in this area.

#### **1. A working group**

A first step is to form a working group to promote the policy and draft a correlative plan. This does not necessarily mean creating a "women's commission" or "equity commission," which could reinforce the attitude that this

is a “women’s” issue or raise suspicions among other party members. Instead, opportunities should be offered for open discussion of the issue, drawing in people who, although they may not be active party members, could help with reflection and gender analysis. Although we do not want to offer a “recipe,” it is important to include leaders from various levels of the party, as well as young members.

As noted above, an initial task for this working group should be to analyze the party’s content (ideology, program, by-laws) and practices from a gender standpoint, identifying not only where the critical points for equity lie, but also where there are embryonic alternatives and forces for change.

While doing the assessment, the promotional group must strengthen its own vision of gender and equity within the framework of party principles. One of the measures that the Partido Socialista Español, PSOE, includes in its *Equality Plan* is the *development of arguments in favour of parity, for dissemination and internal debate* (PSOE, 2002, p. 3). Active members and leaders from various areas of the party should be included in this effort.

## 2. Training

Another step must be to promote an intensive internal training process on gender equity. In her *Expert Opinion*, Diana Ávila stresses that the plans should include a gender audit and expert guidance in the preparation of manuals, as well as gender formation at all levels and in all areas of the party, as indicated in the analysis of Objectives 2 and 3 in the PSOE Equality Plan.

In many cases, parties have adopted resolutions on gender equity and parity in their events (Congresses) and top decision-making bodies. But these resolutions, like the electoral legislation that exists in nearly every country in the region, mean little if they are not accompanied by change in the vision and practices of leaders and citizens. It is therefore crucial to make an ongoing effort

to promote debate and formation. In this regard, learning from other parties' experiences can be useful especially on the implementation of policies and statutes. In Latin America, outstanding experiences include the *Hannah Arendt Institute for Cultural and Political Formation*, promoted by ARI in Argentina (for more information, see: [www.institutoarendt.com.ar](http://www.institutoarendt.com.ar)).

A gender equity training plan must involve interconnected actions targeting the entire party; it may be useful, as the PSOE proposes (PSOE, 2002, p. 5), to have an “equality module” that is used by the entire party, with specific actions for building women’s skills so that they can reach and act effectively at various levels of party responsibility.

### 3. Institutionalizing change

As arguments become more solid and circulate more widely, the next step is to begin to institutionalize equity policies within the party. This means making concrete changes in aspects of party life where the main obstacles have been identified. It is important to establish concrete targets and commitments for reaching them, specific affirmative action measures for women, etc.

There has been much discussion about whether it is necessary to have specific secretariats on this issue. On the one hand, this can ensure that the issue receives specific attention. On the other, it is important to avoid the belief that the issue can be resolved by forming an ad-hoc commission. In this area, it is important to consult and consider various models. The PSOE, for example, has an *Equality Secretariat* (with no other modifier) whose primary objective is to *consolidate “party democracy” within the PSOE, guaranteeing a balance of men and women in decision-making positions and greater participation by and affiliation of women*. Other parties have bodies with more traditional titles (Women’s Secretariat), but have redefined their agendas. That is the case of the historical Partido Socialista Argentino (founded in 1896), which has taken a

clear gender approach (on this, see: Marx and Borner, in Various authors, 2008, pp. 35 and subsequent). A proposal along the same line has emerged within the *Partido Democrático Somos Perú*.

The process of institutionalizing the proposal can reach its peak at a top-level party event (Congress or Conference) at which the most important party documents are reviewed and modified and specific decisions are made that make the changes visible to society (parity-based entities, for example).

## **Conclusion**

A party exists in and for society, and its changes are real if they have an impact on society. A gender-equity plan should therefore have public components. One could be an intensive recruitment campaign that targets women by presenting the party as an organization deeply committed to women's issues, as reflected not only in the party's platform, but also in the makeup of its leadership. Another could be a national political campaign focusing on some of the most relevant issues for women in Honduras. This connects internal changes with changes that are needed in the country and gives them greater legitimacy.

## BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

In her iKNOW Politics *Expert Opinion*, Virginia Vargas suggests the following resources:

Güezmes, Ana. *La deuda de los partidos políticos: construir una agenda política a favor de las mujeres*. Río Abierto. In:

<E:\Documents and Settings\USUARIO\Configuración local\Archivos temporales de Internet\Content.IE5\9HJGDJQG\guezmes PP agenda mujeres.htm>

Lipszyc, Cecilia. *El movimiento social de mujeres y su intento de transformar las relaciones de poder*. In:

<E:\Documents and Settings\USUARIO\Configuración local\Archivos temporales de Internet\Content.IE5\9HJGDJQG\cecilia lypzic.htm>

Miloslavich, Diana (coordinator). *Elecciones 2006 en el Perú. La agenda de género y los planes de gobierno*. Lima: CMP Flora Tristán, 2006.

Neyra Samalvides, Rosa. *Mujeres Humanistas*. In: <http://www.mhp.org.pe/mujereshumanistas.php>

Salguero Carrillo, Elizabeth. *Los derechos de las mujeres en la nueva constitución política del estado*. In: [www.unifemandina.org/un\\_archives/mm9%20las%20ideas%20es.pdf](http://www.unifemandina.org/un_archives/mm9%20las%20ideas%20es.pdf) -

Ávila, Diana. *Expert opinion on how to promote gender equity within a political party*. 2008. In: <http://www.iknowpolitics.org/en/node/5555>

Ballington, Julie and Azza Karma. *Women in Parliament: Beyond the Numbers (revised edition)*. International IDEA, 2005. See: <http://www.iknowpolitics.org/en/node/3920>

Barreiro, Line. *Paridad y evaluación de las cuotas de participación política de las mujeres*. Ecuador, 2007. See: <http://www.iknowpolitics.org/es/node/4614>

Barreiro, Line, Clyde Soto and Lilian Soto. *Sistemas electorales y representación femenina en América Latina*. Chile: CEPAL, 2004. See: <http://www.iknowpolitics.org/es/node/4672>

Bou, Marc. *La participación de las mujeres en la política*. Spain: IIG, 2003. See: <http://www.iknowpolitics.org/es/node/4237>

Bustelo, María and Emanuela Lombardo. *Mainstreaming de género y análisis de los diferentes marcos interpretativos de las políticas de Igualdad en Europa*. Spain, 2004. See: <http://www.iknowpolitics.org/es/node/4290>

Buvinic, Mayra and Vivian Roza. *La mujer, la política y el futuro democrático de América Latina*. United States: IDB, 2004. See: <http://iknowpolitics.org/es/node/3779>

Comité Ejecutivo Nacional (CEN) of the Partido Democrático Somos Perú. *Plan Estratégico para la implementación de políticas de igualdad de género en el Partido Democrático Somos Perú*. Lima, 2008. See: <http://www.iknowpolitics.org/es/node/5536>

Comité Ejecutivo Nacional (CEN) of the Partido Democrático Somos Perú. *Reglamento Electoral del Partido Democrático Somos Perú*. Lima, 2008. See: <http://www.iknowpolitics.org/es/node/5537>

Del Águila, Alicia. *Mujeres en los partidos políticos del Perú. Situación y mecanismos para su promoción*. Lima: Asociación Civil Transparencia, 2004. See: <http://www.iknowpolitics.org/es/node/5445>

Escudero, Ana Lucia. *Mujeres, Partidos Políticos y Reforma Electoral*. Sweden: International IDEA and Transparencia, 2004. See: <http://www.iknowpolitics.org/es/node/474>

García Abel, Paloma and Fernando Sánchez. *La concepción del poder desde las mujeres*. Sweden: International IDEA and Instituto Hannah Arendt, 2005. See: <http://www.iknowpolitics.org/es/node/688>

García Prince Evangelina. *La participación de las mujeres en las estructuras de poder de toma de decisiones*. OEA, 1998. See: <http://www.iknowpolitics.org/es/node/4117>

Gerber, Bet. *La Elegida*. Originally published in *Página 12*, Buenos Aires, 2008. Available at: <http://www.fesgenero.org/default.asp?paginaId=150&moduloAcao=mostraNoticia&noticiaId=9>

iKNOW Politics. *Respuesta consolidada sobre la creación de secciones femeninas en los partidos políticos*, 2008. See: <http://www.iknowpolitics.org/es/node/4446>

Larserud, Stina and Rita Taphorn. *Diseño para lograr la igualdad*. Lima: International IDEA, 2007. See: <http://www.iknowpolitics.org/es/node/3806>

Llanos, Beatriz. *Expert opinion on how to promote gender equity within a political party*. 2008. In: <http://www.iknowpolitics.org/en/node/5555>

Llanos, Beatriz and Kristen Sample. *30 años de democracia: ¿En la cresta de la ola? Participación política de la mujer en América Latina*. Lima: International IDEA, 2008. See: <http://www.iknowpolitics.org/es/node/5262>.

Llanos, Beatriz and Kristen Sample. *Del Dicho al hecho: Manual de buenas prácticas para la participación de mujeres en los partidos políticos latinoamericanos*. Lima: International IDEA, 2008. See: <http://www.iknowpolitics.org/es/node/5795>

Partido Socialista Español (PSOE). *Plan de Igualdad*. Spain: PSOE, 2002. In: <http://www.psoe.es/ambito/igualdad/docs/index.do?action=View&id=41570>

Valladares, Jorge. *Expert opinion on how to promote gender equity within a political party*. 2008. In: <http://www.iknowpolitics.org/en/node/5555>

Various authors. *Del Dicho al hecho: Manual de buenas prácticas para la participación de mujeres en los partidos políticos latinoamericanos. Documentos nacionales y fichas de buenas prácticas*, CD. Jutta Marx and Jutta Borner (Argentina); Gloria Ardaya (Bolivia); Luis Felipe Miguel (Brazil); María Emma Willis and Diana Cardoso (Colombia); Marcela Jager (Costa Rica); Marcela Ríos, Maggi Cook and Daniela Hormazábal (Chile); María Fernanda Cañete (Ecuador); Yolanda Guirola (El Salvador); Claudia López (Guatemala); María Antonieta Martínez (Honduras); Daniela Cerva (Mexico); Eva Samqui Chan (Nicaragua); Mariela Arce (Panama); Milena Pereira and Maridí Gonzales (Paraguay); Beatriz Llanos (Peru), Magaly Pineda (Dominican Republic); Niki Johnson (Uruguay); and Madalena Valdivieso (Venezuela). Lima: International IDEA, 2008.

Wehner, Joachim and Winnie Byanyima. *El parlamento, el presupuesto y el género*. United States, 2004. See: <http://www.iknowpolitics.org/es/node/740>