



## **WEBINAR: The role of ICTs in empowering women in politics**

### **Context**

The 21st century has seen an unprecedented increase in the percentage of internet users around the world. 27.5% of people in Asia are now internet users, in Latin America and the Caribbean it's 42.9% and the increase in internet users from 2000 to 2012 has been highest in the African continent, with an approximate 3,606.7% increase. Over 1.11 billion Facebook users communicate across borders every day. At least one-half of the world's population has a mobile phone, and the number is increasing every day. Texting is the number one most used data service in the world, with 8.6 trillion text messages sent worldwide in 2012. In developing countries, two in three people have mobile phone subscriptions. Interestingly, the most remarkable innovations that have come from the use of mobile phones were where internet coverage was poor.

While it is doubtless that current communication technology has a lot to offer any activist or politician, it may be of particular value for women in politics since mobile phones, the internet and social media channels have the potential to, not only serve as an equalizer for women politicians and activists, but to also increase their political participation. Often discriminated against in traditional media, women have started going around traditional communication outlets, such as television and radio, to adopt more direct and interactive communication tools, such as Facebook, Twitter, SMS, promotional videos, podcasts, and blogs, which have proved very effective, eliminating the use of intermediaries in communication and allowing the women themselves to be 'the news makers'.

Women members of parliament are increasingly using these different technology platforms during their political campaigns and careers to generate dialogue with their constituencies as

elected representatives. Political leaders are catching on to the crowd sourcing possibilities that these technologies offer.

Blogs, Facebook pages and Twitter accounts have been created for many women politicians and activists. Additionally, text messages are used to alert journalists and to create viral campaigns during public rallies, televised debates and press conferences. YouTube videos are also supplementing paid television spots for political messages and breaking dependency on mainstream media sources. Political activists are using these social networks to personally organize events and disseminate information on public policy issues and communication between individual citizens and their government is increasing through online petitions, discussion forums and platforms.

**In this webinar**, we will examine examples of women leaders supplementing traditional communication technologies (i.e.: radio, public address system, television) with new technologies (mobile phones, YouTube, social networks) in order to generate and sustain dialogue with their constituencies.

- How are women candidates using new technologies for fundraising, volunteer recruitment and outreach to voters – and how can women parliamentarians benefit from these innovations?
- Are there examples of women leaders using technology to engage their constituencies and channel public voices within legislative processes?
- How are political activists using social networks to organize people and disseminate information on public policy issues?

## **Format**

- 30 minutes presentation (10 minutes for each panelist)
- 30 minutes Q&A and conclusions