

Background

Following the July 2012 general elections in Mexico and for the first time in Mexican history, over 30% of seats in both houses of congress were held by women. The increase in female participation in Mexican government was a direct result of a series of electoral reforms, beginning in 2008, requiring that 40% of nominated party candidates are women and that at least 2% of public funding of political parties be earmarked for training, promotion and development of women's leadership in the political process. Following the July 2012 elections, the National Democratic Institute (NDI), through programming funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), partnered with various governmental organizations (including the Federal Electoral Tribunal and the Federal Electoral Institute) and non-governmental organizations (including INMUJERES) and political parties (specifically, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), the National Action Party (PAN) and the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD)) to encourage women's participation government and politics through enhanced compliance with gender parity initiatives and a campaign to increase the number of female political candidates (known as *2% y + Mujeres en Política*, or the 2% Campaign).

Gains

- Strategic alliances across party lines, activist groups and academic institutions, such as the 2% Campaign
- Increased availability of trainings on a local level, cross-party workshops, development of annual and short-term work plans and standardization of training materials, among other initiatives offered by women's organizations at PRI, PAN and PRD
- Conferences resulting in networking opportunities, proposals for congressional reform (which were included in the 2013 legislative session) and the creation of a gender equality and women's empowerment advocacy guide
- Increased efforts by senators and deputies to push forward electoral reforms
- Development of campaign strategies, including an overall message, communications plan, social media platform and online portal for the 2% Campaign
- Federal reforms designed to increase transparency and auditing of spending of public funding designated for gender parity

Challenges

- Traditional gender views in politics, resulting in women being overlooked as potential candidates
- Misguided popular notion that are not enough women to fill the 40% quota requirement and that women are not interested in political candidacy
- Economic barriers, including a lack of financial resources to pursue a political campaign or career, due in part to the fact that women tend to have fewer personal economic resources and receive less financial support from political parties than their male counterparts
- Lingering influences from traditional machismo culture, including an impression that women are incapable of being political candidates and, in some cases, a refusal to nominate women as candidates or invest in women's political campaigns
- Harassment of female nominees and elected candidates
- Sexism in policy placements (i.e. placing women in "feminine" areas of tourism, education and health)

Key Takeaways

NDI's programming included variety of training programs, conferences and advocacy support targeted at encouraging women's involvement in government and empowerment and leadership in politics, as well as efforts engagement of party activists and governmental officials to increase awareness of gender issues in these areas. NDI's programs and activities described above produced a number of tangible results. Trainings increased in both frequency and quality, reaching approximately 500 women across six political parties and the vast majority of states in Mexico. National conferences and related initiatives produced the 2% Campaign Advocacy Guide and 25 proposals for constitutional reforms that were incorporated into bill proposals for the 2013 legislative session. NDA facilitated sharing of resources and cross-party dialogue by integrating efforts with PRI, PAN and PRD, as well as other participants in Mexican government, civil society and academia.¹

¹ *Women's Leadership as a Route to Greater Empowerment: Mexico Case Study*, by Mona Lena Krook, July Denham and Silvia Gurrola Bonilla, produced for the United States Agency for International Development, dated December 10, 2014, available at http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pa00k88v.pdf.