

Summary Report

Development Dialogue 10: Women’s Political Empowerment

Development Dialogue is the flagship initiative of UNDP Mongolia’s which aims to support evidence-based policy formulation in Mongolia by providing a platform for discussion, exchange of analyses, and sharing international good practices on key development issues. The Development Dialogue brings together government, development partners, civil society, the private sector, and academia to develop a common understanding about key development issues, challenges and their solutions. Starting from 2012 UNDP hosted nine such dialogues on different development topics, including poverty, mining revenue for development, green development, inclusive growth, harnessing culture for development and urbanization. **The tenth Development Dialogue on the topic of Women’s Political Empowerment** was held in collaboration with the National Committee on Gender Equality (NCGE) on 23 December, 2014 in Chinggis Khaan Hotel.



Mr. Erdene S., the Minister of Population Development and Social Protection and Deputy Chair of the NCGE expressed his enthusiasm to collaborate with stakeholders to improve the current status of women’s underrepresentation at the decision-making level. Ms. Sezin Sinanoglu, UNDP Resident Representative expressed the continued commitment of the UNDP and proposed to revitalize and implement the national action plan to promote gender equality in elected offices that had been developed by national stakeholders in 2012. Women Members of Parliament who participated in the Development Dialogue expressed their positions. Ms. Odontuya S. emphasized the need to raise women’s self-confidence and change their attitude of ‘seating at the back seat’ in the family and society; Ms. Oyun S., defined 30 percent quota on women candidates as non-negotiable stepping stone and stressed the need for women MPs to closely work with the working groups on draft laws. As a reflection on the draft Law on Political Parties which introduces a new provision prohibiting political parties from having affiliated non-governmental organizations, Ms. Oyungerel Ts. highlighted the importance of women’s wings of political parties for advocating the gender equality agenda and most importantly capacity building of women in political organizations. Ms. Erdenechimeg L. called for joint actions by women, through singing a MOU, focusing on leadership training for women candidates, pushing for 30 percent quota and reducing financial burden on women candidates.

Mr. Battsoigt D., male MP enumerated the advantages of having 11 women in the Parliament as initiating laws that have profound social impacts, softening the male dominated atmosphere and bringing a balanced view in parliament. Ms. Bazar Ch., Director of Fresh Water Resources and Conservation Center

and Ms. Tsogzolmaa Ts., President of the Social Democracy Mongolian Women’s Association shared perspectives of women’s wings of political parties. Mr. Lambaa S., Advisor to the Speaker of the Parliament who served as the Chair of the Development Dialogue stressed the importance of keeping women’s wings as an institution under political parties. Ms. Oyuntuya, Advisor to the working group on the Election Law and Mr. Gerel-Od E., Advisor to the working group on the Law on Political Parties introduced the main concept of the respective draft laws. Ms. Bolormaa M., Head of the Secretariat of the NCGE introduced follow-up actions by the government. Mr. Thomas Eriksson, UNDP Deputy Resident Representative summarized the Dialogue proposing a seven points forward-looking agenda drawn from the discussions.



Over 70 representatives including female and male Members of Parliament, government officials, women’s wings of political parties, civil society, academia and international development agencies participated in the Dialogue.

Specific highlights:

Barriers to women’s political participation:

- Although women account for approximately 56 percent of the political party members and tremendously contribute to their parties through their knowledge and skills, they hold a limited number of leadership and decision making positions in their parties and are mostly occupied in positions and activities supporting political party at the grassroots level.
- Women face harsh political competition when running as candidates in elections due to lack of party support, limited access to political networks, stricter qualification requirements applied to women compared with men and rivalry among women.
- Ever-increasing campaign cost is the major barrier. The so-called ‘candidate tax’ exercised by political parties prevents not only women, but also for all qualified candidates without money from running in elections. Women receive little or no financial support from their parties and struggle to raise funds for their election campaign.
- Whereas the proportional representation system is generally regarded as favourable for women, there is no rule for placing women in winnable positions on party lists and district allocation.
- Women find it difficult to get and secure their family support when they choose their political career, and face the dual burden of domestic tasks and professional obligations.
- Although it is changing, traditional attitudes and stereotypes exist about the predominant role of men in politics and state affairs.
- Other barriers include lack of self-confidence to run in elections and the perception of “dirty” politics.

Updates on the two draft laws:

- Proposed amendments to the Law on Elections:
 - Integrated Law on Elections will become an umbrella law regulating the administration of all elections, including parliamentary, presidential and local elections;
 - There will be provisions placing limits on campaign spending;
 - There is no discussion about changing the current mixed electoral system with 48 district seats and 28 proportional seats and changing the 20 percent quota on female candidates.
- Proposed amendments to the Law on Political Parties:
 - A consensus on the main concepts of the draft Law is not reached among political parties;
 - Introduce a state funding mechanism for political parties;
 - A provision on prohibiting political parties from having affiliated non-governmental organizations, as a consequence, political parties cannot have women's wings.

Agreed positions:

- Strongly lobby for 30 percent quota on female candidates as a stepping stone and regulations on placing women in winnable positions on party lists. Women MPs will act as a bridge between stakeholders and the working groups on the draft laws.
- Parties are utilizing voluntary quota, there is a need to institutionalize a compulsory quota through party charters, rather than waiting for the Government initiative and the adoption of laws. Address gender equality in party charters and consider internal party measures to increase women's participation at all levels of the party.
- Lobby for legislative changes for reducing financial burdens such as prohibiting candidate tax, placing limits on campaign expenditures, providing public funding to political parties, including specific funds for capacity building of women members.
- Introduce stronger enforcement measures when there is violation of the above provisions.
- The need for broader consultations on draft laws on elections and political parties, including all parties outside of the parliament and relevant stakeholders.
- Promote women's wings of political parties as an institution which supports identification, recruitment of women members and political career development, networking among women leaders at central and local levels, and cross-party cooperation.
- 'Political participation' should not be understood as only about getting elected in parliament or members of parliament. Prepare women for their political careers starting from primary levels – getting elected in the Citizens' Representative Hurals of the capital city, districts and soums.
- Offer leadership training that builds their long-term capacity for women. Women should carry a message that will empower them to become strong political leaders rather than being viewed as new entrants to the political process.
- Identify men within political parties who support women and reward them with increased media attention on the issue of partnership with women.
- Women themselves need to overcome their low self-esteem and self-confidence, endorsed by certain cultural patterns which do not facilitate women's access to political careers.

Ways forward:

The participant agreed to take the joint actions for the 2016 elections. This is the proposed 7 point action agenda from the development dialogue:

1. **Leadership** - Identify and support champions who can stand for gender equality in political process and elected offices;
2. **Legal reforms** - Lobby for legal reforms including the quota system, placing limits on campaign costs and enforcement mechanisms;
3. **Party reforms** - Lobby for improvement of party internal structures and procedures for gender equality, especially in nominating candidates;
4. **Collaborate** - Women and women's organizations come together and collaborate towards the 2016 elections through signing a MOU;
5. **Capacity** - Develop capacity of women candidates in running the campaign, media relationships, leadership skills and communication skills;
6. **Media/advocacy** - Address the negative portrayal of women in the media by training media representatives in gender sensitization and support women's access to media;
7. **Knowledge/research** - Develop knowledge products to identify the gaps and propose policy recommendations.

