



UNDP Albania Gender and Election Workshop

Final report

Tirana, Albania, May 21-22, 2015



1. Project Background

The June 2015 local elections in Albania, the first held following a major territorial and administrative reform, will be an important test for the country's democratic institutions. Albania's election for the parliament two years ago was in many ways a transformative event in the country's brief history as an electoral democracy. Previous election cycles had been marred by political polarization, allegations about the misuse of public resources, distortion of electoral results, outbreaks of violence, delays in establishing results, and a refusal by the losing side to recognize the outcomes. While Albania faced several of these problems again in 2013, there were a significant number of positive developments unique to this election. Above all, there was a general acceptance by the leading political parties of the outcome.

By legal structure, the policy-making level of election administration continues to be on one level divided along political lines. Previously, polarization of competing parties was so great that the opposition commissioners of the Central Election Commission (CEC) resigned early in the electoral cycle, which left the key decision on results and allocation of mandates up to the judicial appeals body, the Electoral College. However, the CEC is currently fully constituted in preparation for June's local elections, and preparations continue at an accelerating rate as Election Day draws nearer.

These achievements notwithstanding, a majority of positive changes in electoral practices were only realized in a compressed time frame, and with significant international support and advocacy. As is often the case with the conclusion of major election, significant staff turnover followed the parliamentary elections. In addition, much of the technical assistance provided in 2013 was introduced late in the electoral timetable and many cases only partially due to time constraints. The recently completed and politically controversial administrative-territorial reform, which has seen the creation of 61 new local government electoral units out of the existing 378, has wrought a new, significant change in the local election structure.

The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) final election observation report in 2011 local elections has provided a number of recommendations for the improvement of the elections management in Albania. With regards to women's participation in elections, ODIHR documented a still significant rate of family voting, and the rather weak application and enforcement of the gender quotas which contributed to the abysmal numbers of female candidates elected. ODIHR also commented on the lack of representation of women in management positions within the

electoral administration, particularly at the district and voting center levels.¹

2. Project Context

Women's participation in politics and decision-making in general is a continuous challenge in Albania. While there is a perceived growing awareness of gender issues in Albania, many stereotypes on abilities of women to play the role of decision-maker or leader persist, particularly in rural populations. Participation of women in voting has consistently been high in Albania. This has not, however, appeared to translate into any substantial loosening barriers to women's participation in political life.

The phenomenon of family voting has been well documented in Albania by domestic and international observers alike. According to recent studies undertaken by UN Women Albania, family voting has shifted somewhat "behind the scenes" over the past few electoral cycles. The practice occurs much more frequently at home, in terms of the preference of the woman being dictated by a male head of household, as opposed to direct casting of women's ballots in the voting center. Combatting family voting and supporting the overall participation of women in political processes has been the subject of a number of assistance activities in Albania.

In so far as women's participation in politics, Albania's record is mixed. Certainly, a number of studies have shown that in recent years the perception that women can be leaders and decision makers is growing, and fairly strong. Albania's election code amendments in 2008 and 2009 introduced non-binding quotas to candidate lists; however, all the major parties consistently opted to pay a nominal fine rather than comply with an approximate 30% minimum requirement. Consequently only 6% of the elected MPs were female in 2013. In local elections, women were elected Mayor in only 3 of the countries 65 Municipalities (major towns and cities).

Several promising developments in recent months have created conditions for far better representation of women in local governance Albania.

First, amendments to the electoral code will mandate that 50% of a party's candidates for municipal assemblies be women. There were somewhat fewer female candidates for mayor – only 15 of 61 races featured female candidates (or 25% of races). However, the major alliances have put women forward for a number of major cities – including Durres, Sarande, Gironaster, Himarre, Podragedec and Skoder (where both leading candidates were female).

¹ OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final Report, Republic of Albania Local Elections, 8 May 2011. <http://www.osce.org/odihr/81649?download=true>

Second, several new technical changes or improvements will make obtaining data on gender and elections finally possible. Due to recent amendments to the electoral code, the gender of the voter will now be included on the voter list, making it possible to obtain data on voting participation by gender that had been heretofore difficult to discern. The CEC is also developing management systems that will enable it to easily report by gender on voters' participation and candidates standing for office.

The Gender workshop, closely coordinated with UN Women Albania, may be followed by a second workshop estimated to take place in October 2015.

3. Workshop's Objectives

The aim of the Gender and Elections workshop is to improve capacities of stakeholders in understanding gender in electoral processes and plan for greater gender inclusion in Albania. Specifically, the workshop was designed to achieve the following objectives:

- Sensitizing electoral administrators about the importance of women's empowerment and entry points for gender mainstreaming in the electoral process
- Informing civil society organizations and women's advocacy groups about strategies to promote women's participation in electoral processes;
- Providing tools for all participants to critically assess elections from a gender perspective; and
- Offering a networking opportunity for women's advocacy groups.

4. Facilitation Team

The facilitation team comprised a mix of international and national facilitators and resource personnel. Lead facilitator was **Emad Yousef**, an international election specialist, who has worked in elections in more than 30 countries. He has contributed to the development of BRIDGE curriculum since 2005, and is an expert-level bridge facilitator. He has served as an advisor and training specialist with the IDEA, UN, UNDP, IFES, Carter Center and other electoral assistance providers. Co-facilitator was **Alexandra Hoveleaque**, who since 1998 has been part of technical assistance and election observation missions around the world and has worked particularly on issues of capacity building, training, media and communication and campaign finance. She has worked with UN, EU, the African Union, the OSCE, IDEA and IFES. She actively takes part to the development of BRIDGE and is an expert-level facilitator.

Team members worked remotely together and in person prior to the workshop to prepare agenda, materials and workshop activities. Each member was assigned specific activities that he/she prepared the needed resources. The facilitation team provided a positive environment and established a good professional relationship that was maintained throughout the program.

5. The Participants

The participants included staff of the Central Election Commission (CEC) secretariat, and other representatives of civil society organizations in Albania. Originally, the number was expected to reach around 25 participants, but was raised in the two workshop days to above 35 due to more participants showing up in the training venue. Most of these were not formally invited. The importance of the workshop topic, the BRIDGE methodology and the timing of the workshop just ahead of the June Municipal elections could explain the reason for an overwhelming participation.

In total, 41 participants representing various groups attended all or partial workshop sessions:

Institution	# Participants
AISI	1
Change Centre	1
EDM	1
IDRA	1
ISHZSZ	1
UNDP	1
KZCN	1
KZLN	1
KZVN	1
NFPF	1
SHKD	1
UN Women	1
Observatori	3
SHIZI	3
KQZ	23

Total	41
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6. Workshop Preparation and Course Agenda

Workshop preparation started prior to arrival in Albania, and continued upon the arrival of facilitation team to Tirana. BRIDGE Facilitators met with UNDP staff and UN Women to discuss the context, objectives and expected results of the workshop. These discussions helped framing and orienting the development of the training topics and agenda. Following the approval of the agenda, the team started working on the workshop sessions and production of the necessary resources which included a variety of gender related materials both from the BRIDGE curriculum and other texts, observation reports, and global handbooks on gender and elections.

The workshop followed a model of two-day workshop where the facilitation team decided to introduce significant customization to the existing BRIDGE module to cope with the limited time and meet the specific needs of the participants.

The agendas covered the following topics:

- Electoral cycle and interest of women within the cycle,
- International standards concerning women participation in politics and elections in specific;
- Obstacles/barriers to women participation (voter registration; nomination; campaigning; voting);
- Women's Representation – Targets and Numbers- An international perspective;
- Strategies to deal with proxy and family voting and promote independent voting;
- Gender culture/mainstreaming and planning for women's participation in the EMB;
- Electoral Systems/quota: Overview and their effects;
- Strategies to overcome obstacles (EMB; voter education/media; (political parties); other-legal/finance/obs.)

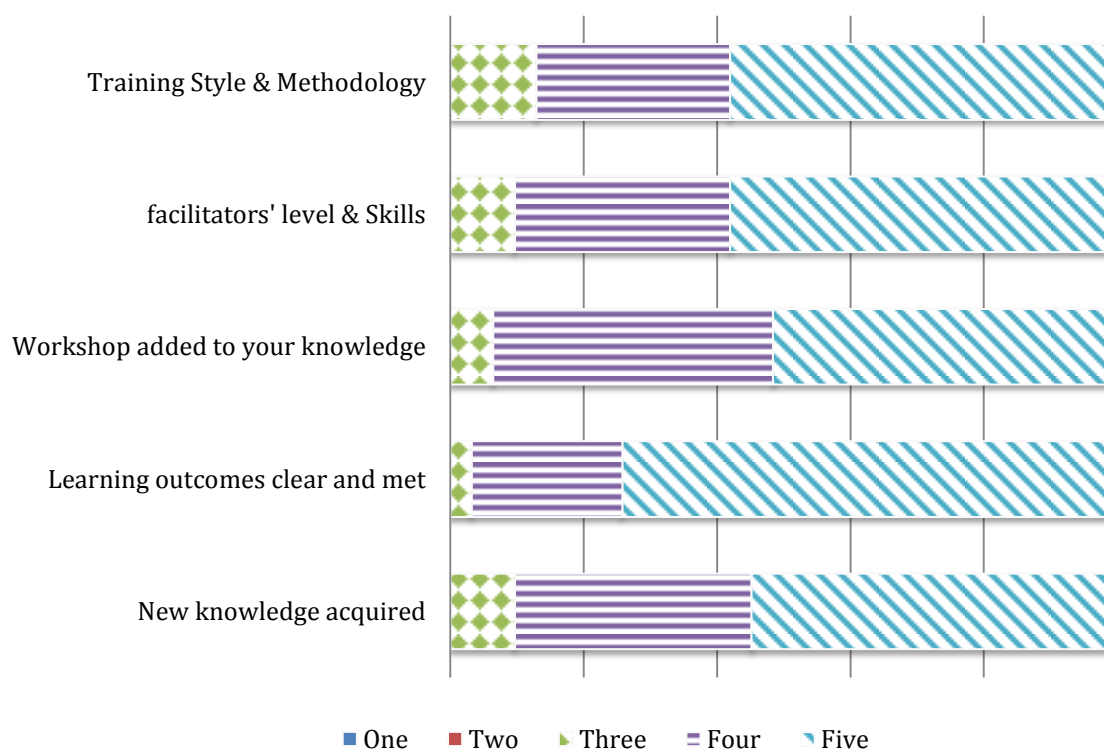
(Detailed workshop agenda is attached as Annex 1)

7. Workshops Evaluation and Participants' Feedback

Daily evaluation forms have been used where participants evaluated the contents and presentation of the day's activities. Final evaluation form has been used to evaluate the overall conduct of the workshop. The final written evaluation form provided feedback on issues related to the potential learning aspects of the workshop and expected impact on

their work. In general participants agreed on the good organization and relevance of the workshop topics, and commended the skills of the facilitators.

The graph below summarizes the results of the final evaluation. All sessions received a majority of 5s - meaning that the objectives were almost completely met.



(Full final evaluation data for the workshop is attached in Annex 2).

8. Conclusions and Recommendations

The workshop topics and the interactive nature of the BRIDGE approach were appreciated by the participants, and appear to have been effective based on the workshop evaluations. The two days of the workshop was short and intensive: It was difficult to significantly reduce the content of BRIDGE Gender methodology. For further future workshops, it is recommended to have a longer timeframe, and ideally 4-5 days.

The topic is extremely important and enjoys high level of interest; therefore, UNDP is encouraged to continue offering such a workshop to interested audiences in Albania who work in raising awareness and enhancing women participation in elections, providing them with knowledge and tools to carry out their programs. The workshop topics can be adapted to suit different groups of audience including different levels of election commissions, political parties, and civil society organizations. There is clearly scope and value in the

Albanian context for further versions of the workshop aimed at wider audiences.

Here are some recommendations for future UNDP activities on the topic:

- To further UNDP work on gender and elections, and to build on what has been achieved in this workshop, it is desirable to organize more workshops on the topic. The post election period might offer a suitable time to discuss lessons learned from the June election and help build a national strategy to enhance women representation and political participation;
- Similar workshops should not be limited to Tirana. Local CEC & CSOs, should have the opportunity to participate in such workshops;
- For future workshops, UNDP should consider resources for longer workshops, ideally 4-5 days.
- Preparation time for this workshop was very tight and limited. For future plans, UNDP should plan for a longer in-country preparation, and production of workshop resources, especially international documents, in local language;
- BRIDGE appears to be appealing for both CEC and CSOs in Albania. It might be a suitable time for UNDP, in cooperation with other BRIDGE partners, to start thinking of possible long term plans to implement BRIDGE in Albania in a way that is sustainable and ensures local ownership of the process.
- Depending on the topic, BRIDGE could be offered to Albanian-speaking officials and representatives from civil society groups from Kosovo, Macedonia and Albania, allowing for regional exchange of experience and peer learning, as well as further dissemination of the BRIDGE methodologies.

9. Acknowledgements

The facilitation team wish to thank all of those who made this workshop possible, particularly the country office team including Yesim Oruc, Gavin Weise and Xhesi Mane. Gavin's experience and knowledge of Albania and the CEC helped shaping the context and format of the workshop, His insistence and follow up, while engaged with other pressing duties, was significant and much appreciated, Yesim's directions and support was of great help, and Xhesi continuous support and help was indispensable.

Thanks also go to Fiorela Salshi from UN Women for her input, assistance and participation in workshop, and to the excellent translators and Albanian Experience, particularly Adora Anrdio.

10. Annexes

Annex 1 – Detailed Workshop Agenda

Day 1			
Start	Duration	Ref.	Activity
08:30	00:30:00		Registration and coffee
09:00	00:30	Ge. 1	JOINT SESSION Welcome/opening/ housekeeping
09:30	00:20	Ge 1.1	Background to BRIDGE Project
09:50	00:10	Ge 1.1	Ge. 1.1 Overview of the Agenda
10:00	00:30	Ge 1.1	Ice-breaker / Introductions
10:30	00:15	Ge 1.1	Ge.1.2 Code of conduct during this course
10:45	00:15	-	Break
11:00	00:10		Intro of gender and election - definition, why it's important
11:10	00:45	Ge.3.4	Activity #1: Electoral Cycle Presentation
11:55	01:05	Ge 2.2	International Standards and Principles/Albania situation
13:00	01:00	-	Lunch
14:00	00:30	Ge.3.1	Ge.6.1 A Level Playing Field
14:30	01:00	Ge.3.4/6.2 (old)	Obstacles/barriers to women participation (voter registration; nomination; campaigning; voting)
15:30	00:15	-	Evaluation and Conclusion
15:45	-	-	End

Day 2

Start	Duration	Ref.	Activity
08:30	00:30		Registration and coffee
09:00	00:15	-	Intro & Recap / Icebreaker
09:15	00:30	Ge.6.1	Women's Representation – Targets and Numbers
09:45	00:30	Ge.5.3	Proxy and family voting
10:15	00:15	-	Break
10:30	00:45	Ge.9.1	Gender culture/mainstreaming in EMBs
11:15	00:45	Ge 7.2	Electoral Systems/quota Overview
12:00	00:30	Ge 7.2	Quota Controversies
12:30	01:00		Lunch
13:30	01:30	Ge.3.5/6.3 (old)	Strategies to overcome obstacles (EMB; voter education/media; (political parties); other-legal/finance/obs..)
15:00	00:30		JOINT SESSION-Evaluation, Certification and Closing
15:30	-	-	End of Training

Annex 2 – Final Evaluation: Electoral Systems Workshop

Data

	New knowledge acquired	facilitators' level & Skills	Training Style & Methodology	Learning outcomes clear and met	Workshop added to your knowledge
1	5	5	4	4	5
2	5	5	4	5	5
3	5	5	4	4	5
4	4	4	4	5	5
5	5	5	5	5	5
6	5	5	5	5	5
7	5	5	5	5	5
8	3	4	3	3	3
9	4	5	4	5	4
10	5	5	5	5	5
11	5	5	5	5	5
12	4	5	4	4	4
13	4	5	5	5	4
14	5	5	4	5	5
15	4	5	4	5	5
16	3	5	5	5	3
17	5	5	5	5	5
18	5	4	5	5	4
19	5	5	5	4	4
20	5	5	5	5	5
21	4	4	5	4	4
22	4	4	4	4	3
23	4	5	4	5	5
24	4	5	5	4	4
25	5	5	4	4	3
26	4	5	5	4	5
27	5	4	5	5	5
28	5	5	4	4	4
29	5	5	5	5	5
30	3	3	3	3	5
31	4	4	4	3	4

Percentages

	New knowledge acquired	facilitators' level & Skills	Training Style & Methodology	Learning outcomes clear and met	Workshop added to your knowledge
One	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Two	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Three	10%	3%	6%	10%	13%
Four	35%	23%	42%	32%	29%
Five	55%	74%	52%	58%	58%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Chart

