



ANALYSIS OF ARMENIA POLITICAL PARTY PLATFORMS FROM GENDER EQUALITY PERSPECTIVE



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LIST OF ACRONYMS

| | |
|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ARF | Armenian Revolutionary Federation |
| BPfA | Beijing Platform for Action |
| CCP | <i>Civil Contract Party</i> |
| CEC | Central Electoral Commission |
| CEDAW | UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women |
| CSO | Civil Society Organization |
| ICCPR | International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights |
| NA | National Assembly |
| NDI | National Democratic Institute |
| OSCE | Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe |
| OSCE/ODIHR | OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights |
| RoA | Republic of Armenia |
| UDHR | <i>UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights</i> |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |

INTRODUCTION

The “PROMOTING MORE GENDER-SENSITIVE LEGISLATION IN ARMENIA” joint project of *OxYGen* Foundation and National Democratic Institute funded by USAID aims at building capacities of key stakeholders, and specifically women members of the Parliament (MPs) and their support staff on gender mainstreaming of the Republic of Armenia legislation by offering research, theoretical knowledge and practical learning exercises.

Considering the enhanced role of political parties in promoting women’s leadership also due to the introduction of gender quota during both local and national elections, one of the project components is directed to the analysis of the political parties’ platforms to assess the commitment and capacity of current major political parties for mainstreaming women empowerment and leadership, as well as to provide with evidence-based recommendations for further capacity building and policy reforms for promoting women empowerment and gender equality agenda within political parties.

The analysis has been carried out on the basis of basic national and international documents on women’s rights and gender equality signed and ratified by the Republic of Armenia, including the *UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW, 1979), *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* (1995) and *Agenda 2030: Sustainable Development Goals* (2015), as well as of the platforms of those political parties that participated in parliamentary elections and were and/or are represented in the RoA National Assembly in the aftermath of the general elections in 2017, 2018 and 2021. The analysis proceeds from the achievements and shortcomings in the area of gender equality and women’s political participation in the political parties.

The findings of the current analysis may lay the ground for the wider discussions and face to face consultation meetings with representatives of political parties.

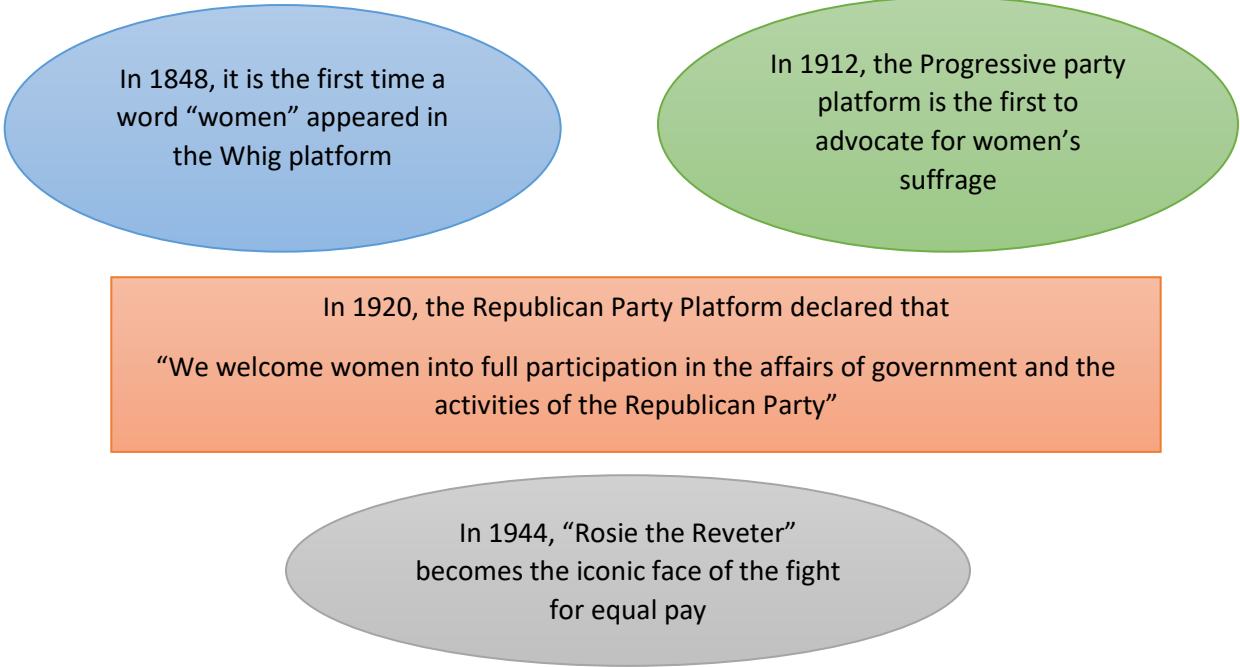
PART 1. WOMEN’S ISSUES IN POLITICAL PARTY PLATFORMS: INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

Promoting democratic governance requires creating and maintaining a gender-responsive political environment and promoting empowerment of women. The inclusion of women's perspectives and their participation in politics are prerequisites for democratic development and contribute to good governance. Political parties are the most important institutions influencing these processes.

Political parties are influential in determining which issues inform the political debate: they formulate a policy, set governance priorities and are therefore strategically placed to address the concerns of women.

Every four years political parties state their position in written platforms. How often do women issues appear there?

The PUDDING¹ looked at US political parties’ platforms between 1840 and 2016 and found that in 45 documents with 934,068 total words only 28,854 words related to women, which means that in 176 years just slightly over 3% of the content of the texts addresses women issues. Thus,



¹ <https://pudding.cool/projects/votes-for-women/>

In 1948, the Democratic Party Platform stated that
“We favor legislation assuring that the workers of our nation receive equal pay for equal work, regardless of sex.”

In 1976, the Republican Party made the following statement:

“The question of abortion is one of the most difficult and controversial of our time. It is undoubtedly a moral and personal issue but it also involves complex questions relating to medical

In 1984, the Republican Party:
“Participation of women and policy making is a strong commitment by the party”

The 2016 platform of Democrat Hillary Clinton, who was the first woman to lead a major party ticket, is the first to include the phrase “women of color”

Although the causality between the promotion of women’s issues and a party’s electoral success has not been well documented, findings from different research in the area suggest that political parties have increased their support base and gained electorally after adopting reforms to promote women’s empowerment. There may be many positive spinoffs for political parties that took these approaches:

- Public perceptions can be altered and interest renewed in political parties with waning levels of support.
- Taking the lead on women’s empowerment can generate new support bases and attract new members to the party.
- These reforms could also attract the support of sister parties, party internationals and the international community to implement new initiatives, such as training and mentoring programs.

- Women are more likely than men to come from civil society and, therefore, to have stronger relationships with CSOs. These linkages may reflect positively on the political party in terms of establishing relations with grassroots and constituencies.
- Ultimately, putting in place strategies to promote women's empowerment can lead to more democratic and transparent political parties. Such strategies may also result in the inclusion of other under-represented groups.

These processes are also based on the terms of parties' internal organization and the extent to which parties are inclusive of different societal groups, particularly in terms of candidate recruitment, and how the party reaches out to and includes women. Women and gender equality issues are mentioned in the parties' platforms when women appear in the decision-making position of the parties.

The adoption of a statement on gender equality in the parties' founding documents is an important first step in providing the framework for moving toward more inclusive and responsive political parties.

The level of women's representation in such structures provides insights into the degree to which the political party is committed to gender equality. Globally, women are under-represented in leadership positions within political parties, although they usually constitute between 40 and 50 percent of party members. The proportion of women in party leadership positions is estimated at around 10 percent, although this number increases in parties that have adopted rules guaranteeing women's participation within internal decision-making structures. The participation of women in governing boards is important for several reasons, notably to ensure that women's perspectives contribute to shaping party policies, priorities, strategies, and platforms. It is becoming more commonplace for parties to adopt such measures. Examples include²:

- **Australia's** Labor Party has adopted internal quotas guaranteeing women's participation in some of their governing boards.

² *Empowering Women for Stronger Political Parties: A Good Practices GUIDE to Promote Women's Political Participation*. UNDP and NDI, 2011.

- **Morocco:** The *Socialist Union of Popular Forces* has internal quotas for each local branch, which has helped foster women's inclusion at all levels of the party.
- **Mexico:** The *Party of the Democratic Revolution* was one of the first parties to adopt a 20 percent quota in 1990, which was later raised to 30 percent. The *National Action Party* followed suit, adopting an internal party quota to ensure women's representation in the executive committee and on governing boards.
- **India:** The National Executive Committee of the *Bhatariya Janata Party* amended its constitution in 2008 to reserve 33 percent of the party's leadership positions for women and make the Chief of the National Women's Branch a member of the party's Central Election Committee.
- **Germany:** The *Christian Democratic Union* adopted a 33 percent quota for party officials in 1996. If the quota is not met, the internal elections must be repeated.
- **South Africa:** Rule 6 of the *African National Congress'* Constitution states that, with the aim of ensuring full representation of women in all decision-making structures, the party will implement a program of affirmative action including a quota of no less than 50 percent of women in all elected structures.

In addition to leadership positions, political parties can ensure that women are appointed to key party committees, taskforces, and working groups.

The survey of 300 parliamentarians by the *Inter Parliamentary Union*³ shows that platforms of political parties are key determinants of legislative priorities and agendas. Political parties can promote women's empowerment through policy development in at least two ways: (a) by supporting gender specific policy reform, and (b) by ensuring that gender perspective is mainstreamed into all policy debates and priorities of the party, including promoting gender equality in such areas as health, nationality, labour, land rights, social security, inheritance and access to justice. Parties can also ensure that international commitments, such as the *UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW), are incorporated into national legislation and inform government action.

³ <https://www.ipu.org/our-impact/gender-equality/women-in-parliament/ipu-knowledge-hub-women-in-politics>

Thus, for example:

In Spain: *The Socialist Workers' Party* sponsored the passage of a gender equality law and sought to mainstream gender into the policy-making process. Since 2004, the party has introduced several pieces of legislation, including on agricultural reform, dependent care, and legislated candidate quotas.

In Rwanda: Legislative reform has focused on the law on inheritance and succession (1999), the child protection law (2001), and the gender-based violence law (2009). Parties have also been influential in ensuring that other pieces of legislation are gender-sensitive and child-friendly, including the law on national citizenship, classification of genocide crimes, and protection of witnesses.

In some cases, parliamentarians may have a limited ability to address gender equality issues because of lack of knowledge or lack of gender equality issues envisioned in parties' platforms. For the most part, parties' platforms determine the way the party group in parliament votes on a particular issue. This reinforces the importance of ensuring gender mainstreaming in the political parties' platforms.

PART 2. INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTRUMENTS ON WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION AND GENDER EQUALITY IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

Women's full participation in political and electoral processes originates in the principles of non-discrimination and equal enjoyment of political rights underlined in the UN *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) adopted in 1948, the UN *Convention on the Political Rights of Women* (CPRW, 1952) and other documents that explicitly state that the enjoyment of such rights shall be without distinction of any kind, including sex or gender. The *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR, 1966) enshrines the rights of all citizens to "take part in the conduct of public affairs" and "to vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the electors."

While the ICCPR establishes that no discrimination on the basis of sex is permitted in the exercise of the rights to vote and to participate in public life, the *Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW, 1979) goes even further.

It places the following obligation on States parties: “States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right: (a) To vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies; (b) To participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government; (c) To participate in non-governmental organizations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country.”

Women’s right to participate fully in public life has been set forth in other UN resolutions and declarations, such as the *UN Economic and Social Council Resolution (E/RES/1990/15)*, the *Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action (1995)*, the Security Council Resolution 1325 on *Women, Peace and Security (2000)*, the General Assembly Resolution 66/130 on *Women and political participation (2011)*, and the Sustainable Development Goals (2015). The signatory Governments have consistently been urged to implement measures to act accordingly and to ensure the enjoyment of equal rights and opportunities by women and men.

The domestic legal frameworks and provisions on gender equality and women’s participation in the electoral process establish the main principles of the organization of the electoral process and have a great impact on the achievement of fair outcomes of elections and correspondingly on the content of the political parties’ platforms. Thus, in Armenia, the Constitution explicitly guarantees nondiscrimination (Article 29), legal equality for women and men (Article 30), including dignity, fundamental rights and freedoms (Article 3) as well as rights of suffrage (Article 7 and 48)⁴.

The principles set forth in the *Electoral Code of the Republic of Armenia* include the Universal Suffrage (Article 3): “Citizens who have the right to vote, regardless of nationality, race, gender, language, religion, political or other conceptions, social origin, property or other status have the right to elect and be elected. Any restriction of the electoral right on the above-mentioned bases is prosecuted by the law”; and Equal Electoral Rights for all (Article

⁴ <https://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?DocID=108723>

4): “a) Citizens participate in elections on equal basis; b) The state ensures equal conditions for the exercise of the citizens' electoral right”. The *Electoral Code* stipulates also a gender quota which is applied to both national and territorial lists used in parliamentary elections, as well as to local self-government elections in Yerevan, and the regions of Armenia, as well as envisages certain safeguards for maintenance of the quota in the elected body as well as secures a requirement on certain proportion of sexes in the composition of Central and Territorial Electoral Commissions.

As per the RoA Constitutional Law on Parties⁵, equality regardless of sex, race, age, disability, property status etc., as well as a ban on discrimination are envisioned by Article 4. (*Principles of party activity*).

Gender equality laws around the world contribute to counter discrimination against women and to guarantee equal and fair treatment of men and women, so that they can fully exercise their human rights. Thus, the RoA *Law on Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men* regulates the issue in the fields of politics, public administration, labour and employment, entrepreneurship, health care, education, etc. Particularly with Article 12 (*On Guarantees of Equal Voting/ Electoral Rights*), equal rights and opportunities should be ensured for women and men to participate in any type of elections and plebiscites at central and local levels.

⁵ <https://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?DocID=143938>

PART 3. ANALYSIS OF POLITICAL PARTIES PLATFORMS FROM GENDER EQUALITY PERSPECTIVE

- BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Republic of Armenia is a sovereign, democratic, social state governed by the rule of law. (Article 1.)

In the Republic of Armenia, the power belongs to the people. The people shall exercise their power through free elections, referenda, as well as through state and local self-government bodies and officials provided for by the Constitution. (Article 2)

The human being shall be the highest value in the Republic of Armenia. The inalienable dignity of the human being shall constitute the integral basis of his or her rights and freedoms; The respect for and protection of the basic rights and freedoms of the human being and the citizen shall be the duty of the public power; The public power shall be restricted by the basic rights and freedoms of the human being and the citizen as a directly applicable law. (Article 3)

State power shall be exercised in conformity with the Constitution and the laws, based on the separation and balance of the legislative, executive and judicial powers. (Article 4)

The National Assembly shall be the representative body of the people, which shall implement the legislative power. The National Assembly shall exercise supervision over the executive power, shall adopt the State Budget and perform other functions prescribed by the Constitution. The powers of the National Assembly shall be prescribed by the Constitution. The National Assembly shall be composed of at least one hundred and one Deputies. The National Assembly shall be elected through proportional electoral system. (Articles 88, 89)

Constitution of the Republic of Armenia⁶

Snap parliamentary elections were held in Armenia on 20 June 2021. The elections had initially been scheduled for 9 December 2023, but were called earlier due to a political crisis following the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War.

Following the parliamentary elections, the ***Civil Contract*** party received 54% of the vote and won 71 seats, a majority in the 107-seat parliament. The opposition ***Armenia Alliance*** finished second with 29 seats, while the ***I Have Honor Alliance*** won 7 seats.

⁶ <http://www.parliament.am/parliament.php?id=constitution&lang=eng#4>

In total, four alliances and 23 parties⁷ participated in the elections⁸. This is a significant increase in the number of parties competing, as only nine parties and two alliances had competed in the parliamentary elections in December 2018⁹ as well as more than the number of parties that participated in the parliamentary elections in April 2017¹⁰.

- PARTICIPANTS OF PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS HELD IN 2017, 2018 AND 2021

The list of the political parties and electoral alliances that participated in the last three parliamentary elections of 2017, 2018 and 2021 is as follows:

| ## | Political Party | Year of establishment | Participation in 2017 | Participation in 2018 | Participation in 2021 | Leader |
|----|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. | <i>Bright Armenia</i> | 2015 | <i>Way out alliance</i> | <i>Bright Armenia</i> | <i>Bright Armenia</i> | Edmon Marukhyan |
| 2. | <i>Republic Party</i> | 2001 | <i>Way out alliance</i> | <i>We Alliance</i> | <i>Republic Party</i> | Aram Sargsyan |
| 3. | <i>Civil Contract</i> | 2015 | <i>Way out alliance</i> | <i>My step alliance</i> | <i>Civil Contract (Allied with the United Labor Party and the Mighty Homeland Party)</i> | Nikol Pashinyan |
| 4. | <i>Free Democrats</i> | 2011 | <i>Free Democrats alliance</i> | <i>We Alliance</i> | ----- | Khachatur Kokobelyan |
| 5. | <i>Freedom Party</i> | 1997 | | ----- | <i>Freedom Party</i> | Hrant Bagratyan |

⁷ Several of the parties and all of the alliances were established in 2020 or 2021 right before the 2021 snap elections.

⁸ Three parties withdrew from the electoral campaign or withdrew their applications during the pre-election period: 1) *the Christian-Democratic Rebirth Party* decided to withdraw its application for participation in the elections as an independent entity; instead the party participated as a part of the *Shirinyan-Babajanyan Alliance of Democrats*. 2) *the Armenian Eagles Unified Armenia Party* terminated its election campaign and did not participate in the elections. 3) *The Democratic Way Party* boycotted the elections claiming that the election results would be rigged.

⁹ The following parties decided to not participate in the elections or failed to register in 2018: *the Armenian Communist Party, the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party (Ramgavar), the Armenian National Congress, the Dignified Future, Dignified Way Party, the Democratic Party of Armenia, the European Party of Armenia, the For Social Justice, the Green Party of Armenia, the Heritage party, the Social Justice Party, the Liberal Democratic Union of Armenia, the National Agenda Party, the National Democratic Union, the People's Party of Armenia, the Unified Armenians Party, the Union for National Self-Determination, and the Yerkir Tsirani (Apricot Country) Party.*

¹⁰ The total number of political forces that participated in the 2017 parliamentary elections is 9, with 3 political parties and 6 alliances (that consisted of the total of 15 political parties).

| | | | | | | |
|-----|-------------------------------------------|------|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| 6. | <i>Orinats Yerkir</i> | 1998 | <i>Armenian Renaissance</i> | <i>Orinats Yerkir</i> | ----- | Arthur Baghdasaryan |
| 7. | <i>Unified Armenians Party</i> | 2000 | | ----- | ----- | Ruben Avagyan |
| 8. | <i>Prosperous Armenia</i> | 2004 | <i>Tsarukyan Alliance</i> | <i>Prosperous Armenia</i> | <i>Prosperous Armenia</i> | Gagik Tsarukyan |
| 9. | <i>Alliance Party</i> | 2015 | | ----- | Allied with the <i>Armenia is Our Home</i> party | Tigran Urikhanyan |
| 10. | <i>Mission Party</i> | 2013 | | <i>My step alliance</i> | ----- | Manuk Sukiasyan |
| 11. | <i>Armenian National Congress</i> | 2008 | <i>ANC-PPA Alliance</i> | ----- | <i>Armenian National Congress</i> | Levon Ter-Petrosyan |
| 12. | <i>People's Party of Armenia</i> | 1998 | | ----- | ----- | Stepan Demirchyan |
| 13. | <i>Republican Party of Armenia</i> | 1990 | <i>Republican Party of Armenia</i> | <i>Republican Party of Armenia</i> | <i>I have honor</i> alliance | Serzh Sargsyan |
| 14. | <i>Armenian Communist Party</i> | 1991 | <i>Armenian Communist Party</i> | ----- | ----- | Tatchat Sargsyan |
| 15. | <i>Heritage party</i> | 2002 | <i>ORO alliance</i> | ----- | ----- | Raffi Hovhannissian |
| 16. | <i>Unity party</i> | 2016 | | ----- | ----- | Vardan Oskanyan |
| 17. | <i>Armenian Revolutionary Federation</i> | 1890 | <i>Armenian Revolutionary Federation</i> | <i>Armenian Revolutionary Federation</i> | <i>Armenia Alliance</i> | Armen Arustamyan |
| 18. | <i>Citizen's Decision</i> | 2018 | ----- | <i>Citizen's Decision</i> | <i>Citizen's Decision</i> | Suren Sahakyan |
| 19. | <i>Christian-Democratic Rebirth Party</i> | 2018 | ----- | <i>Christian-Democratic Rebirth Party</i> | <i>Shirinyan-Babajanyan Alliance of Democrats</i> | Levon Shirinyan |
| 20. | <i>National Progress Party of Armenia</i> | 2018 | ----- | <i>National Progress Party of Armenia</i> | ----- | Lusine Haroyan |
| 21. | <i>Sasna Tsrer Pan-Armenian Party</i> | 2018 | ----- | <i>Sasna Tsrer Pan-Armenian Party</i> | <i>National Democratic Pole</i> | Varuzhan Avetisyan |
| 22. | <i>Fair Armenia Party</i> | 2021 | ----- | ----- | <i>Fair Armenia Party</i> | Norayr Norikyan |
| 23. | <i>Awakening National Christian Party</i> | 2021 | ----- | ----- | <i>Awakening National Christian Party</i> | Ara Zohrabyan |
| 24. | <i>Homeland party</i> | 2020 | ----- | ----- | <i>I have honor</i> alliance | Artur Vanetsyan |

| | | | | | | |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------|------|-------|-------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 25. | <i>United Homeland Party</i> | 2021 | ----- | ----- | <i>United Homeland Party</i> | Mher Terteryan |
| 26. | <i>All-Armenian National Statehood Party</i> | 2021 | ----- | ----- | <i>All-Armenian National Statehood Party</i> | Artur Vardanyan |
| 27. | <i>Armenia is Our Home</i> | 2018 | ----- | ----- | <i>Armenia is Our Home</i> | Ara Abramyan |
| 28. | <i>Homeland of Armenians Party</i> | 2018 | ----- | ----- | <i>Homeland of Armenians Party</i> | Artak Galstyan |
| 29. | <i>Union for National Self-Determination</i> | 1987 | ----- | ----- | <i>Free Homeland Alliance</i> | Paruyr Hayrikyan |
| 30. | <i>Armenian Constructive Party</i> | 2018 | ----- | ----- | | Andrias Ghukasyan |
| 31. | <i>Conservative Party</i> | 1991 | ----- | ----- | | Mikael Hayrapetyan |
| 32. | <i>National Democrats Union</i> | 2001 | ----- | ----- | | Arshak Sadoyan |
| 33. | <i>Green Party</i> | 1999 | ----- | ----- | | Armenak Dovaltyan |
| 34. | <i>Democratic Party of Armenia</i> | 1991 | ----- | ----- | <i>Democratic Party of Armenia (Allied with Social Democrat Hunchakian Party)</i> | Aram Gaspar Sargsyan |
| 35. | <i>5165 National Conservative Movement Party</i> | 2021 | ----- | ----- | <i>5165 National Conservative Movement Party</i> | Karin Tonoyan |
| 36. | <i>For The Republic Party</i> | 2020 | ----- | ----- | <i>Shirinyan-Babajanyan Alliance of Democrats</i> | Arman Babajanyan |
| 37. | <i>National Agenda Party</i> | 2018 | ----- | ----- | <i>National Agenda Party</i> | <i>Avetik Chalabyan</i> |
| 38. | <i>Rise Party</i> | 2021 | ----- | ----- | <i>Rise Party</i> | Aleksan Minasyan |
| 39. | <i>Liberal Party</i> | 2021 | ----- | ----- | <i>Liberal Party</i> | Samvel Babayan |
| 40. | <i>European Party of Armenia</i> | 2018 | ----- | ----- | <i>European Party of Armenia</i> | Tigran Khzmalyan |
| 41. | <i>Reborn Armenia</i> | 2021 | ----- | ----- | <i>Armenia Alliance</i> | Vahe Hakobyan |
| 42. | <i>One Armenia</i> | 2019 | ----- | ----- | <i>Armenia Alliance</i> | Arthur Ghazinyan |

| | | | | | | |
|-----|-------------------------------------------|------|-------|-------|---------------------------------|------------------|
| 43. | <i>National progress party of Armenia</i> | 2018 | ----- | ----- | <i>National Democratic Pole</i> | Hayk Grigoryan |
| 44. | <i>Sovereign Armenia Party</i> | 2021 | ----- | ----- | <i>Sovereign Armenia Party</i> | Davit Sanasaryan |

Thus, the total of 44 political parties took part in the elections held in Armenia starting 2017 when Armenia launched a transition to a parliamentary Republic: Some of the parties participated separately; some in alliances.

Only 6 out of 44 parties participated in all 3 electoral processes as separate parties or in alliances with others:

| ## | Party | Participation in 2017 | Participation in 2018 | Participation in 2021 | Leader |
|----|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------|
| 1. | <i>Bright Armenia</i> | <i>Way out alliance</i> | <i>Bright Armenia</i> | <i>Bright Armenia</i> | Edmon Marukhyan |
| 2. | <i>Republic Party</i> | <i>Way out alliance</i> | <i>We Alliance</i> | <i>Republic Party</i> | Aram Sargsyan |
| 3. | <i>Civil Contract</i> | <i>Way out alliance</i> | <i>My step alliance</i> | <i>Civil Contract</i> | Nikol Pashinyan |
| 4. | <i>Prosperous Armenia</i> | <i>Tsarukyan Alliance</i> | <i>Prosperous Armenia</i> | <i>Prosperous Armenia</i> | Gagik Tsarukyan |
| 5. | <i>Republican Party of Armenia</i> | <i>Republican Party of Armenia</i> | <i>Republican Party of Armenia</i> | <i>I have honor alliance</i> | Serzh Sargsyan |
| 6. | <i>Armenian Revolutionary Federation</i> | <i>Armenian Revolutionary Federation</i> | <i>Armenian Revolutionary Federation</i> | <i>Armenia Alliance</i> | Armen Arustamyan |

Among these parties and alliances only those listed below were elected to the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia of the 6th, 7th and 8th convocations:

| 6 TH CONVOCATION | PARTY OR ALLIANCE | SEATS |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------------|-------|
| | <i>Republican Party</i> | 58 |
| | <i>Tsarukyan Alliance</i> | 31 |
| | <i>Way Out Alliance</i> | 9 |
| | <i>Armenian Revolutionary Federation</i> | 7 |
| | Total seats | 105 |

| 7 TH CONVOCATION | PARTY OR ALLIANCE | SEATS |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|-------|
| | <i>My Step Alliance</i> | 88 |
| | <i>Prosperous Armenia</i> | 26 |

| | | |
|--|-----------------------|-----|
| | <i>Bright Armenia</i> | 18 |
| | Total seats | 132 |

| | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-------|
| 8 TH CONVOCATION | PARTY OR ALLIANCE | SEATS |
| | <i>Civil Contract</i> | 71 |
| | <i>Armenia Alliance</i> | 29 |
| | <i>I Have Honor Alliance</i> | 7 |
| | Total seats | 107 |

- ANALYSIS OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES' PLATFORMS

Women's representation in the National Assembly and other elected bodies is slowly advancing in Armenia. In 1999, women held only 3 per cent of seats in the Parliament and only 10.7 per cent in 2012. Today, women constitute 35.5 per cent¹¹ of all members of the National Assembly and 31 % of local self-governance bodies¹². Yet despite this progress, it remains relatively rare for women to successfully advance to the top decision-making posts as speakers of parliament, heads of party groups and/or parliamentary commissions and State of commissions or Ministers:

| PARLIAMENT (8 th convocation) | Number of people in position | Number of women |
|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------|
| Speaker | 1 | 0 |
| Deputy speaker | 3 | 0 |
| Standing committees | 12 | 2 |
| Political Faction | 3 | 0 |
| GOVERNMENT (since 2021) | | |
| Prime Minister | 1 | 0 |
| Deputy Prime Minister | 2 | 0 |
| Minister | 12 | 1 |

However, 35.5 per cent is the threshold that was dreamed by a number of women organizations and human rights defenders in Armenia for many years.

The *extent* to which women are represented in national legislative or executive bodies in any country is determined by a number of factors. These factors include general progress towards achieving equal rights and opportunities for women and men in the public and

¹¹ <http://www.parliament.am/deputies.php?lang=eng> : 38 female MPs out of 107 members of Parliament

¹² <http://womennet.am/en/>

private spheres, a level of development of political and electoral systems, and a level of institutionalization and transparency of political decision-making.

On the other hand, the *need* for women to be represented at the political decision-making level is accounted for by the fact that they express views of citizens - both men and women - and bring them to relevant public policy forums. There is also some correlation between women's representation in decision-making and the extent to which social issues, such as problems in the areas of health, education and social services, are raised at the decision-making levels.

At the same time, political parties' views and interpretation of gender equality and women's issues can create barriers to PP member-women's meaningful participation in policy-making. Therefore, women in political parties should be supported by their political force's platform to advance women's agenda on a decision-making level.

The current analysis of political parties' platforms is based on the understanding that a political party recognizes equality between women and men as a fundamental aspect of a democratic society and is committed to promoting equal opportunities for all.

While political parties must adhere to regulatory standards set by the state and international and national human rights instruments, they are more likely to promote women's issues if there are incentives to do so, whether those incentives translate into electoral success, increased access to public resources, improved public image, or more efficient and effective functioning of party structures and procedures. The evidence suggests that raising more women-related issues in politics provides tangible benefits for political parties. On the one hand, women are the majority of voters in the country. On the other hand, "in many countries, women are also more likely than men to turn out to vote and can "deliver the margin of victory for successful parties and candidates".¹³

¹³ *Empowering Women for Stronger Political Parties. A Good Practices Guide to Promote Women's Political Participation*, UNDP/NDI, 2011.

In order to understand the extent to which Armenian political parties are sensitive to gender equality and women's issues the platforms of the following political parties elected to the National assembly since 2017¹⁴ were analysed.

Armenian Revolutionary Federation¹⁵ Party

Armenian Revolutionary Federation was founded in 1890. It is an observer member of the Party of European Socialists. The party participated independently in 2017 elections and obtained 7 seats in the Parliament of the 6th convocation. In 2018 ARF also participated in the elections but failed to obtain seats in the Parliament. Currently, the party has no separate political representation in the National Assembly but it is affiliated with the *Armenia Alliance* and has 10 seats in the Parliament (of the 8th convocation).

Bright Armenia Party

Bright Armenia was founded in 2015. The *Bright Armenia* party participated in the 2017 Armenian parliamentary election and the 2017 Yerevan City Council election as part of the *WayOut* Alliance. Following the 2018 Armenian parliamentary election, the party emerged as the third largest in the National Assembly with 18 seats. The party is a member of the *Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe* Party and maintains a pro-European ideology. The party participated in the 2021 elections but failed to ensure any seat in the Parliament of the 8th Convocation.

Civil Contract Party

Civil Contract was established in 2013 as a non-governmental organization. In 2015, it was registered as a political party. The *Civil Contract* party participated in the 2017 Armenian parliamentary election and the 2017 Yerevan City Council election as part of the *WayOut* Alliance. Following the 2018 Armenian Velvet Revolution, a new *My Step* Alliance was formed by the *Civil Contract* and *Mission* parties and gained a ruling majority in the National Assembly. The *My Step* Alliance dissolved in May 2021 as the *Civil Contract* party opted to

¹⁴ Only platforms of the political parties that participated in parliamentary elections and were and/or are represented in the RoA National Assembly in the aftermath of the general elections in 2017, 2018 and 2021 were analysed. Please see the table on pp 16-17

¹⁵ The parties are presented in alphabetical order

participate in the 2021 Armenian parliamentary elections independently. Following the 2021 elections, the party was able to retain its ruling majority.

Republic Party

The *Republic Party* was founded in 2001 by ex-members of the *Republican Party of Armenia*. The party participated in the 2017 Armenian parliamentary election and the 2017 Yerevan City Council election as part of the *Way Out Alliance*. Prior to the 2018 Armenian parliamentary election, the party formed the *We Alliance* with the *Free Democrats*, another pro-European political party in Armenia. However, the alliance received just 2% of the vote which was lower than the 5% minimum threshold required, the *We Alliance* of the *Republic* and *Free Democrats* parties failed to gain representation in the National Assembly. In 2021, the party participated as a separate entity and again obtained no seats in the Parliament.

Prosperous Armenia Party

The *Prosperous Armenia* party was formed in 2004. The party is a member of the *Alliance of Conservatives and Reformists in Europe* and maintains a Eurosceptic and Pro-Russian ideology. In 2017, the party was represented in the Parliament as members of the *Tsarukyan Alliance* with the *Alliance* and *Mission* parties and held 31 seats. In the 2018 elections, the *Prosperous Armenia* party participated as a separate entity and was able to obtain 26 seats (the second largest party in the National Assembly of the 7th convocation). As a result of the 2021 snap parliamentary elections, the *Prosperous Armenia* party has no political representation in the RoA National Assembly.

Republican Party of Armenia

The *Republican Party of Armenia* was founded in 1990. The party maintains a right-wing ideology and is an observer member of the *European People's Party*. It was the main ruling party in Armenia from 1995 through 2018. As a result of the 2017 parliamentary elections, the party had 58 seats. After the 2018 elections, the party lost its position in the legislature and the Government and only in 2021 was able to return to the Parliament with 4 seats as part of the *I have honor Alliance*.

All the above-mentioned political parties and alliances published their platforms and organized election campaigns to promote the main tenets of their ideology and/or approaches to solving pressing problems in 2017, 2018 and 2021.

Women's and gender equality issues in political parties' platforms are the matter of expectations, needs and political expression by women of their demands.

Of course, certain female and male expectations may coincide, but there are also specific, gender-based needs and expectations: for example, the issue of women's participation in decision-making, the issue of gender segregation in the economy with a resulting gender pay gap, gender discrimination in the workplace, etc. Was this agenda part of the platforms of political parties and party alliances?

First of all, it should be noted that platforms of the political parties participating in the elections reflect the existing situation in the country.

For the elections in 2017, which were held after the 4-day war around Nagorno-Karabakh in 2016, issues of regional security and country's defense were top priority and only then attention was paid to issues of economic development and social services.

The platforms of other political parties under consideration do not contain gender-sensitive provisions, but it can be ***assumed*** that the implementation of some program provisions may contribute to the expansion of women's economic opportunities or have an indirect impact on improving their situation.

Thus, in the 15 priority steps of the ***Tsarukyan Alliance***, some attention is paid to economic development issues through the *exemption of taxes for small and medium enterprises for three years* as well as proposed reduction of interests for agricultural loans to 3-5% can contribute to women's economic progress as well.

There are favorable provisions for the development of SMEs in the platform of the ***Way out Alliance*** as well. The platform of the alliance envisages also doubling the budget funds allocated for general education and increasing teachers' salaries - again assuming that women who constitute more than 80% of the workforce in this area will benefit from this initiative. Another noteworthy provision in the *Way Out Alliance's* platform relates to the

establishment of permanent family support services, reforms in foster care institutions and introduction of a position of a psychologist in maternity hospitals to prevent transfer of newborns with health problems to special institutions. In all these cases, women are indirect or *by-default* beneficiaries and not a separate group of population with its practical needs and strategic interests.

The issue of improvement of women's political representation could be considered in connection with the promise made by the **Republican Party of Armenia** to introduce a proportional list for the election of local self-government. This approach provided an opportunity for the application of a gender quota and more effective expansion of women's representation in the local government system. However, the National Assembly of the 6th convocation never discussed this issue, even though it had been raised. Instead, the issue was raised and appropriate changes to the Electoral Code were introduced by the NA of 7th convocation.

All provisions on human rights in the **Armenian Revolutionary Federation** party's platform were included in the *Human being and the State* section, which contains principles of justice, fair competition, and ensuring opportunities for all. It can be assumed that they also apply to women, but international experience shows that this type of approach tends to lead to gender-blind policies and fails to improve the situation.

A big wave of civic activism arose within the context of the Velvet Revolution in 2018. As it usually happens during similar movements, civic disobedience actions, confrontations in the streets, and participation in demonstrations and marches triggered a new wave of inspiration among women and, especially, young women.

***Democratic Party Platform,
2016, USA***

During the same period of time, the **US Democratic Party** had already pledged to:

Guaranteeing Women's Rights - we are committed to ensuring full equality for women. Democrats will fight to end gender discrimination in the areas of education, employment, health care, or any other sphere. We will combat biases across economic, political, and social life that hold women back and limit their opportunities and also tackle specific challenges facing women of color. After 240 years, we will finally enshrine the rights of women in the Constitution by passing the Equal Rights Amendment. And we will urge U.S. ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women.

The new Government and the Prime Minister underlined many times the importance of women's participation in public life and of their more active involvement in country's economic development¹⁶. "Women have to play a crucial role in new Armenia as evidenced by the fact that it was the civic activism of women that allowed us to implement historical changes in Armenia. Women should be active in both political and socio-economic terms in new Armenia; they should have more opportunities for political, social and economic leadership. This is one of our government's most important priorities".¹⁷

Following the above-mentioned statement that parties' platforms tend to reaffirm the existing situation and to aggravate acute problems in the society it was expected that the political parties' platforms prepared for the *Snap 2018 elections* should be more women-oriented and gender-sensitive.

Now let us see what has been shown by the political parties selected for the analysis:

Thus, the *Republican Party's* platform for the 2018 elections focuses on the traditional family and on preservation and development of national-traditional values.

The *Prosperous Armenia Party* declared State-sponsored care for mothers and families with many children, planned to increase the amount of one-time childbirth allowance for the first and second children, and to increase the amount of financial support provided to the third and subsequent children.

Bright Armenia party's platform envisages the development and implementation of a demographic policy (birth rate increase, creation of necessary conditions for immigration, provision of benefits to children in the family benefits system, introduction of child cards, affordability of kindergartens and other educational institutions, law on large families, etc.). More "liberal provisions" of the same platform promised to pursue targeted investment

¹⁶ (i) Statement by Prime Minister N. Pashinyan at the 74th Session of the UN General Assembly, 2019 <https://www.primeminister.am/en/press-release/item/2019/09/26/Nikol-Pashinyan-74th-session-of-UN-General-Assembly>; (ii) **Speech at the** opening of the international conference of the World Association of Women Entrepreneurs (FCEM), 2019, <https://www.primeminister.am/en/press-release/item/2019/04/26/Women-Entrepreneurship/>

¹⁷Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's Congratulatory Message on March 8, 2020, <https://www.primeminister.am/en/statements-and-messages/item/2020/03/08/Nikol-Pashinyan-Congratulations/>

policies in some areas (for example, in the light industry, which essentially addresses women's labor rights) and to increase funding for preschools.

My Step Alliance platform mentioned the equality between men and women as a basic thesis, which however, did not provide for the implementation of an equal opportunities policy. A good indicator was taken the education sphere: *to ensure the enrollment of 70% of children over the age of 3 in pre-school education by 2023*, but it was done for the sake of children and not young mothers, as no other suggestion was aimed at young mothers' support. The platform also suggested paying attention to "maternal and child health, improvement of reproductive and adolescent health, which will have a positive effect on the birth rate and consequently on the natural growth of the population..." However, women are mentioned among social protection targets. Another point that is of utmost interest relates to the party's promise to change the "philosophy of administrative system formation," which will no longer be affected by "gender stereotypes and discrimination".

The "main issue" for the left-wing parties was family again. Considering the low birthrate as a demographic catastrophe, the **Armenian Revolutionary Federation** party promised to provide assistance to young families. Unfortunately, it was not mentioned what type of assistance is envisioned and who among the two young parents is considered the main beneficiary.

Conservative and Unionist Party, UK

Conservative and Unionist Party is one of two main political parties and current governing party in the United Kingdom, winning the 2019 general election with an overall majority in the House of Commons. The party is generally considered to sit on the centre-right of the political spectrum, and to be ideologically conservative. The party was formed in 1834. Currently the party has the Women wing within its structure - the **Conservative Women's Organisation (CWO)** which represents the female members of the Conservative Party in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Although the organisation primarily represents the views of the women grassroots members of the Conservative Party, it is also involved in policy and research, which particularly affect women in the UK. It does this primarily through its CWO Forums - panel based discussion meetings that are generally held in the Palace of Westminster. Subjects covered in the last 5 years include: Human Trafficking, Sexual Exploitation, Policing, 'Big Brother' Syndrome, Animal Welfare, Drugs, Immigration/Asylum, Environment, Criminal Justice System, Food Labelling, Housing/Planning, Mental Health, Pensions, Forced Marriages, Prostitution, Cyber Bullying, Local Government, Taxation, Rural Poverty, etc.

The next snap parliamentary elections were held in Armenia in June 2021. The elections had initially been scheduled for 9 December 2023, but were called earlier due to a political crisis following the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War and an alleged attempted coup in February 2021.

‘The elections took place in an atmosphere of continuing tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The national security situation dominated the political discourse during these elections. The economic downturn, resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and the war, further impacted the electoral environment.’¹⁸

Due to the fact that the elections were organized “unexpectedly”, not all political parties, and especially those that had been formed during the pre-election period in the spring of 2021, were able to prepare and present their platforms. Moreover, this time it was not required by law and the Central Election Commission (CEC) to register the platform along with the party.

According to the Central electoral commission only 4 out of 26 (25) parties/ alliances widely announced their platforms.¹⁹

| # # | Party/ Alliance | Link to the platform |
|--------|------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | REPUBLIC PARTY | https://res.elections.am/images/doc/HK_20_06_2021p.pdf |
| 2 | HAYOTS HAYRENIQ PARTY | https://res.elections.am/images/doc/HAYHK_20_06_2021p.pdf |
| 3 | VERELQ PARTY | https://res.elections.am/images/doc/VK_20_06_2021p.pdf |
| 4 | NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC AXIS PAN-ARMENIAN PARTY | https://res.elections.am/images/doc/AJBHK_20_06_2021p.pdf |

Meanwhile some parties used their own websites to announce their platforms and the parties under review are among them:

| # # | Party/ Alliance | Link to the platform |
|--------|-----------------|----------------------|
|--------|-----------------|----------------------|

¹⁸ OSCE/ODIHR REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA EARLY PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS 20 June 2021 .Election Observation Mission Final Report, 2021; https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/5/4/502386_0.pdf

¹⁹ <https://www.elections.am/Elections/Parliamentary>

| | | |
|---|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | CIVIL CONTRACT | https://www.civilcontract.am/hy |
| 2 | ARMENIA ALLIANCE | https://նաշխմար.հայ/program |
| 3 | I HAVE HONOR ALLIANCE | https://www.pativunem.am/hy/programs/ |
| 4 | BRIGHT ARMENIA PARTY | https://www.brightarmenia.am/gallery/files/2487%20BRIGHT%20ARMENIA%20PARTY%20POLITICAL%20PROGRAM.pdf |

Thus, not all parties prepared platforms and not all platforms were developed in the traditional way - concentrating only on foreign policy, regional security, and issues of army development. And this is not surprising, since during the pre-election period, the national security situation dominated the political discourse. However, some political parties and alliances have been able to develop and present their platforms.

For the 2021 snap elections, the **Prosperous Armenia Party** didn't prepare any platform and was not very active in pre-elections campaigns and debates²⁰.

The **Republican Party** stated that "women and men are equal before God and the state", have equal rights and this principle should be maintained at all levels of state policy.

Remaining faithful to its paternalistic approach, the **Bright Armenia** party continues to consider women only from the perspective of demographic issues, with major focus on an increase of maternity capital, a decrease of a loan rate for single mothers and those with large families, as well as organization of kindergartens, etc. Women were mentioned also under the workforce development strategies and again as mothers.

The **Armenian Revolutionary Federation** didn't announce any separate platform in 2021 and presented its view and plans within the platform of the **Armenia Alliance**. The statement made by this platform was long awaited and unprecedented for Armenia. It says: *The potential of women will be used in various spheres of public life. Women will be represented at all levels of decision-making and a national machinery for gender equality will be established to achieve this.* There are also other directions, such as development of SME and priorities for family microbusiness, improvement of education and science as well as

²⁰ Yerevan Press Club. MONITORING OF ARMENIAN MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE JUNE 20, 2021 SNAP ELECTIONS TO THE RA NATIONAL ASSEMBLY , p.45; https://ypc.am/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Elections2021_YPC-Monitoring_Final-Report_eng.pdf

cultural life mentioned in the platform that could be of interest for women and can affect the improvement of women's status in Armenia.

Among the directions where the ruling **Civil Contract** party mentioned women are the following: 1) Employment: *We will increase employment among economically active population. ... It is impossible to achieve economic growth without a significant increase in the proportion of economically active citizens. From this point of view, it will be extremely important to ensure mobility of the population, development and realization of creative abilities, as well as to increase participation of women in economic life. In the post-crisis period, the low involvement of women in economic life is unacceptable. The Government will develop a package of measures to support citizens of the Republic of Armenia, and especially women, in the development and realization of their creative and business potential.* 2) *Combating Gender-based Violence through establishment of the counselling centers and shelters in the regions of Armenia;* 3) *Improvement of "Family Code" and child rights legislation in order to institutional foster care and child adoption mechanism, as well as* 4) *improvement of maternity, reproductive health of women.*

Following the experience of other political parties and alliances, the **I Have Honor** Alliance mentioned women under the "demographic" part of the platform, as well as committed to develop special programs to involve persons with disabilities and women in the army.

PART 4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Thus, it could be concluded that selected for the current analysis parties still lack an in-depth understanding of the gender equality principle and as a result:

- Even taking into account the fact that some platforms contain women and gender related vocabulary the platforms are not gender sensitive. It means that the platforms are developed without taking into consideration the existence of different sexes, as a result the means and approaches presented there are not in the interests of any gender. The ultimate goal of ensuring equal rights and opportunities for all is missing;

- The platforms have no separate section for advancement of women or any affiliation to gender equality issues;
- Gender equality issues are not raised in the crucial sections on administrative system, human capital development, economic growth (with some exceptions), advancement of education, IT, etc.;
- The majority of parties refer not to the issue of ensuring gender equality, but to “women’s issues”, and, moreover, they do it with a paternalistic approach;
- Figuratively speaking, women are viewed mainly as mothers and not as citizens, specialists, politician or public figures. It is obvious that mothers need paid maternity leave and child care allowance. However, this is not enough for a specialist who has become a mother, she needs a flexible work schedule, an institution of nannies, a wide and reliable network of preschool institutions (including for toddlers) and child care centers, adaptation programs for integration into the labor market after leaving maternity leave, holidays, etc.

As a result, the majority of political parties didn’t plan any concrete action dedicated to promotion of gender equality issues as well as priority areas for women, their practical gender needs and strategic interests for the period of their participation in the parliament.

In order to help political parties to mainstream their platforms with women and gender equality issues the following could be also proposed:

- Support the development and dissemination of the guiding materials on gender equality and mainstreaming containing information on the main provisions of the national and international documents; recent statistics and research in the area²¹ among political parties and MPs;

²¹ For this work CSOs and Political parties could be also guided by the NDI Handout on “Women’s Policy Platform” https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKewi_g4vHs7j2AhV4QvEDHU5bBjkQFnoECA8QAw&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ndi.org%2Fsites%2Fdefault%2Ffiles%2FHandout%25201%2520-%2520Women%2527s%2520Policy%2520Platform%2520Fact%2520Sheet.doc%23%3A~%3Atext%3DA%2520Women%27s%2520Policy%2520Platforms%2520is%2Cequal%2520voice%2520in%2520policy%2520making.&usg=A_OvVaw0yprCt6i7e2E4FSIDiDkAl

- Develop capacities of political parties' members in gender equality issues, international and national documents on gender equality;
- Build the capacities of political parties' members on gender mainstreaming principles and approaches;
- Support cooperation of female MPs with their counterparts from other countries and sister political parties;
- Support cooperation of political parties' members with representatives of civil society, particularly those concerned with gender equality issues.
