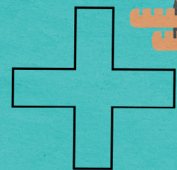
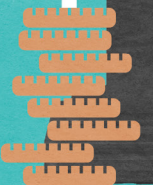




## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# Towards the democratization of the financing of political parties and electoral campaigns in Latin America





# Introduction

50-50 parity in decision-making is not only a right but also the way to guarantee the fulfillment of women's rights in all other areas. This has been pointed out by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in its last General Recommendation N°40 in 2024, and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, where almost 30 years ago the world recognized that “without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women's point of view at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved”.

Although political equality is recognized in international, regional, and national normative frameworks and commitments in Latin America and the Caribbean, parity continues to be a pending debt at most decision-making tables. Biases based on cultural gender stereotypes, asymmetrical and hierarchical power relations, the naturalization of politics as a traditionally masculine space, persistent obstacles in political and electoral systems, violence against women in politics, the unfair distribution of care, as well as the inequitable distribution of political party and electoral campaign financing and its impact throughout women's political careers, have been identified as some of these limitations.

This calls for progress in measures to comply with the standards and commitments established by the States and to transform a political culture that continues to exclude women, undervaluing their capabilities, contributions, and leadership simply because they are women.



*“The lack of access to economic resources is a critical issue that, in some cases, is a determining factor for a woman to continue with her political career. In my case, I have remained in politics despite economic limitations, but I have seen many women give up due to the different challenges that politics implies for a woman, including economic ones.” (Congresswoman, Mexico. 10/9/2021).*



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# Gender-Responsive Public Political Financing of Political Parties and Electoral Campaigns

Globally, there is agreement on the need to create favorable conditions for women's candidacies, guaranteeing equal access to campaign financing while also addressing indirect resources and care responsibilities, which impact the time and budgets of women candidates. In this sense, global evidence shows that inequity in access, mechanisms, modalities, criteria, and distribution channels of political financing represent one of the main obstacles to the inclusion and active participation of women in politics, with a direct impact on the different phases of their political trajectory and, particularly, on electoral campaigns.

For this reason, within the framework of the research Towards the democratization of political party and electoral campaign financing in Latin America, a regional overview is provided on the main advances in the area of women's political rights and, based on a broad review of the literature and commitments assumed by the States at the regional and international levels, the importance of advancing towards measures that generate more equal conditions in access to public political financing is supported.

Likewise, based on a review and analysis of electoral laws or codes, party laws and/or of political organizations and other specific regulations of national scope regarding public political financing in 18 Latin American countries, those measures adopted to promote better conditions for the full and effective participation of women in political life are presented and analyzed in a comparative form. The analysis complements publicly available data and information with direct contributions from electoral bodies that participated in the research.



**To date, 11 countries in Latin America regulate -from a gender perspective- some resources for electoral parties and campaigns. Legislation promoting more equal conditions in the non-electoral stage is more extensive than the provision of resources for this purpose in the electoral and post-electoral stage.**

For the study, funds and/or any resources (formal or informal) of private origin were not included in the analysis; however, it should be noted that private income can have a substantial impact on electoral campaigns, with specific effects on women's candidacies.

## Public resources for the strengthening of leadership and political participation of women in non-electoral periods



**10 Latin American countries have included the provision of allocating public funds by gender to strengthen women's political participation within political parties or organizations.**

Two countries, Costa Rica and Peru, define the parity criterion for the distribution of party resources earmarked for training, i.e., resources received for this purpose must be allocated equally to men and women. Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Honduras and Mexico regulate specific percentages for the strengthening of women's capacities and leadership out of the total resources received by parties in non-electoral periods. Finally, Argentina, Ecuador and Panama regulate percentages of the amount received by each political party for training and education activities.

Criteria for the Allocation of Percentages of Public Financing for the Strengthening of Women's Political Participation					
Parity in training funds		Percentage of the total amount of public resources allocated to each party		Percentage included in training of the party	
Costa Rica	Parity	Brazil	5%	Argentina	30%
Peru	Equality, parity and non-discrimination	Chile	10%	Ecuador	20%
		Colombia	15%	Panama	20%
		Honduras	15%		
		Mexico	3%		



*"We are too unequal to enter these spaces equally."* (Vice-governor candidate and Afro-descendant, Brazil. 20/10/2021).



**In 7 Latin American countries, the current regulatory framework contemplates control and follow-up mechanisms and sanctions for non-compliance with the percentages set aside by law for the promotion and strengthening of women's political participation.**

However, within the framework of research within this research, great challenges were identified in the monitoring and control of political party spending, as well as with respect to access to public information or systematized and disaggregated data in this area, with the exception of the National Electoral Institute of Mexico and the Electoral Service of Chile, institutions that have specific reports on the application of these control systems.

Compliance with the regulations requires continuous monitoring and oversight processes, which must be undertaken both by electoral bodies and within political parties and organizations, not only to guarantee compliance with the law and transparency, but also to ensure that the resources allocated to the training of women are actually invested for that purpose.

<b>Provision for Penalties for Non-Compliance with the Percentages of Public Funds Allocated for the Strengthening of Women's Political Participation</b>	
<b>Argentina</b>	A fine of twice the amount not allocated to in the next distribution of the permanent party fund.
<b>Brazil</b>	Transfer the balance to a specific account, prohibiting its application for any other purpose, so that the remaining balance must be applied within the following fiscal year, under penalty of an increase of 12.5% of the expected value.
<b>Chile</b>	An amount equivalent to what is lacking to meet the aforementioned minimum will be deducted from their respective contributions for the following year.
<b>Costa Rica</b>	The Supreme Electoral Tribunal shall not authorize the payment of any amount for training and promotion directed to both sexes.
<b>Honduras</b>	Parties may be subject to a penalty of 5% of the political debt.
<b>Mexico</b>	Economic sanction consisting of an amount equal to the amount that was not applied.
<b>Panama</b>	Two types of sanctions: suspension of political financing or suspension of quarterly disbursements.

## Direct public resources and/or reimbursements for candidates in electoral and post-electoral stages



**4 Latin American countries have regulated, from a gender perspective, the allocation of resources for the electoral and post-electoral stages.**

In Mexico, Chile, and Brazil, the regulations provide for the allocation of specific and differentiated resources for the candidacies of men and women during electoral campaigns to overcome structural barriers that may place women at a disadvantage. On the other hand, in Colombia and Chile, additional

resources are allocated to political parties and organizations according to the number of women elected as an incentive for them to bet on greater participation and inclusion of women.

Although the study does not analyze the impact of these measures on women's political participation, the global evidence shows the importance of their design to achieve the desired objective. The timing of the distribution of funds, the degree of dependence of the parties on public funding, and the amount of the sanction or incentive for the parties could be factors to be taken into account for their effectiveness. However, in political financing systems organized around parties, as is the case in Latin America, advancing measures that promote the equitable distribution of resources can be beneficial to encourage greater political participation of women.

Direct Resources and/or Reimbursements			
Direct resources for women candidates' campaigns		Incentives for political parties on the percentages of women elected	
Brazil	Minimum 30% of the Special Fund for Campaign Financing for women candidates (with a specific % for black candidates)	Colombia	5% of the National Political Financing Fund distributed among all political parties or movements <b>in proportion to the number of women elected</b>
Chile	Candidates for senator and congresswomen are entitled to <b>additional reimbursement of their election expenses</b>	Chile	Political parties are entitled to an amount of <b>support for each woman elected</b>
Mexico	50% of the public financing available to each party or coalition for campaign activities, for women		



*"Few women become candidates and, of that low percentage, most of them are not regularly recognized as political figures; therefore, donors are reluctant to invest, according to them, in those who have little chance of being elected, and it would be a waste of money or support. With similar criteria, the political party also does not support the few women that they nominate." (Former elected convention delegate, Panama. 28/9/2021).*

## Indirect resources for women candidates in the electoral stage

The legislation of 16 of the 18 countries analyzed includes, as part of indirect public political financing, the provision of free campaign space in the media (electoral slots), distributed to political parties according to equality criteria and/or according to the proportion of votes obtained in the last election. The countries that do not include slots in their legislation are Costa Rica and Honduras.



**Of these 16 countries, only 4 have adopted legislative measures to ensure the allocation of mandatory percentages of electoral slots to women candidates.**

Without mechanisms, the prominence and location of the candidacies could be decisive in obtaining some media coverage. However, more often, women candidates must develop different strategies to manage their campaign resources and publicize their candidacies and proposals.

Indirect Financing for Women Candidates: Regulating Access to Electoral Slots in the Media	
<b>Bolivia</b>	<b>From 25% to 50% for female candidates</b> , including native peasant women
<b>Brasil</b>	<b>30% minimum and 70% maximum</b> for candidacies of each sex
<b>Mexico</b>	<b>Not less than 50%</b> for women
<b>Peru</b>	Criteria of equality, <b>parity</b> and non-discrimination in allocation



*"Since there is no regulation that determines an equitable distribution and since the parties and movements are almost entirely led by men, they are the ones who head the lists or define who goes in the first positions, and men are generally preferred. In these conditions, it is to the heads of the lists that the greatest investment in publicity is dedicated." (Mayoral candidate, Ecuador. 11/10/2021).*

## The key role of electoral bodies for the full exercise of women's political rights

Electoral institutions play a substantial role in the different phases of democratic life. Among their responsibilities is providing equal conditions for those who participate in the electoral process, and they are one of the protagonists that, in recent years, have promoted or strengthened favorable changes for the advancement of women's exercise of their political rights.



**In 14 of the 18 countries analyzed, the gradual and increasingly sustained implementation of programs and initiatives to strengthen women's political participation was identified, with different scopes in terms of periodicity, timing and coverage.**

The measures adopted are diverse in nature, ranging from the generation of regulations and materials (guides and manuals, for example), the implementation of training and awareness-raising on women's political participation, different communication strategies and actions, the promotion of regulations and affirmative actions and parity, as well as the creation of gender institutions within electoral bodies. In Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, and Paraguay, the contents included in the training are linked to political financing and accountability.

## **Barriers, Experiences, and Challenges for Women's Political Participation from Their Own Voices**

The research also analyzes and systematizes the structural gender barriers that impact access to financing and resources for electoral competitions, based on the reports of 71 women from 16 Latin American countries.

The sample was designed to include a diverse group of women who participate in politics at the national and subnational levels, including senators, deputies, mayors, and councilwomen, and to adopt an intersectional approach. This made it possible to collect diverse experiences and perceptions concerning access to public and private financing, and to reveal an intricate series of elements that express multiple inequities and inequalities.

Through their testimonies, structural determinants that limit women's equal performance in politics are analyzed:

- ➔ the characteristics of electoral systems, position mandates, and the location of candidates on lists are determining factors in their limited access to resources;
- ➔ women's insufficient economic autonomy and their precarious income-generating conditions are an impediment to their political insertion and performance;
- ➔ the care responsibilities that fall primarily on women and expose them to disadvantages compared to their male counterparts who participate in the electoral contest without having to assume these tasks simultaneously;
- ➔ the social constructions on which the patriarchal political culture is based and, consequently, violence against women in politics.



**From an intersectional approach, it is evident that these gender inequalities are intertwined and overlap with ethnicity, race, age, and sexual and gender identity, which increases inequalities and possibilities of accessing resources.** It was also noted that, in most cases, women had to self-manage their campaigns and assume their costs (and debts) by resorting to multiple strategies that allowed them to compensate for the lack of resources and support.



*"It should be noted that, as a general rule, women are poorer than men and are less able to finance themselves. Even those who, like me, have greater economic stability, caring for family members is a priority and ends up consuming a larger part of their budget, in addition to their time, which is precious for campaigning."* (Candidate for federal deputy, Brazil. 25/10/2021).

It is especially noteworthy that gender gaps are accentuated during the electoral period, a stage determined by a broad mobilization of resources and highly commercialized electoral campaigns. The campaign strategies used in local spheres, rural areas, and communities acquire some specific characteristics in their implementation, with specificities that can be differentiated, among others, according to the territorial areas, the contexts in which the elections are held, as well as by their belonging to different indigenous, peasant or Afro-descendant communities.



*"The main difficulty in accessing funding was because I was a woman, young and indigenous."* (Candidate for Congresswoman, Guatemala. 13/10/2021).

## Summary of proposals and recommendations

Advancing towards the full and effective participation of women in all decision-making systems requires the commitment of multiple actors to guarantee conditions of greater equality in electoral contests and political and public life.

The study proposes a series of recommendations based on the international normative instruments and commitments in force, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the General Recommendations n°23, 28, 35, and 40 of the CEDAW Committee; the Agreed Conclusions of the 65th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (2021); SDG 5.5 of the 2030 Agenda; the regional commitments assumed through the Regional Gender Agenda and the Buenos Aires Commitment (2022); as well as the national regulations related to women's political participation in force in the countries selected in the study, and the different research, contributions and antecedents referenced throughout the document.

- 1** First, it recognizes the **fundamental role of the States** in promoting norms, policies, and other initiatives to advance the equal and inclusive representation of women in all decision-making systems and to transform the social and political culture that continues to limit the full exercise of women's political rights, including through the regulation of public financing of political parties and electoral campaigns.
- 2** **Electoral institutions** are also encouraged to take the lead in initiatives that promote a more equitable distribution of public resources for political parties and electoral campaigns and to strengthen their role in monitoring and oversight of political parties and organizations to respond to the principle of transparency and accountability and to guarantee equal conditions for women candidates. Studies and the collection and systematization of data to report on the effectiveness of existing regulations or the need to advance reforms or regulations to apply the legislation are encouraged.
- 3** In turn, evidence shows that the commitment of **political parties and organizations** to the full and effective participation of women in decision-making is fundamental to guarantee the democratization of their internal structures, including through the equal inclusion of women in the leadership of their organizations, as well as a more equitable distribution of public and private funds, they receive for their operation and for electoral campaigns.
- 4** In addition, there is also a call for the **media and digital platforms** to contribute to promoting a social and political culture that does not discriminate against women in all their diversity, making women's leadership, candidacies, and proposals visible in their platforms; and guaranteeing public debates free of violence for women.
- 5** Finally, **international organizations, academic institutions and women's and feminist organizations** are invited to strengthen alliances and continue researching and advocating for the adoption of mechanisms that guarantee equal conditions in political financing for women.



**All recommendations can be consulted in detail on page 85 of the study.**

**FULL DOCUMENT**





