

Haiti: would more women be elected?



Haiti is immersed in an intense, long and complex electoral process. After the first round of elections on August 9, the second round of legislative elections, the first round of the presidential elections and municipal elections took place on 25 October. The possible second round of presidential elections and local elections will be held on December 27.

The results of the elections of 25 October will be announced in a few days. However, the last elections held on 9 August marked two worrying trends: On the one hand, the low turnout of the electorate (only 18% voted) for reasons such as actual or perceived violence, mistrust, misinformation, and difficulties of access to the voting centers, etc. On the other hand, the female representation quota of a minimum 30% among candidates set out in the Electoral Decree, which should have guaranteed 2,232 of the female candidacies, was not accomplished. According to statistics, only 9% of the candidates were female in the first round of the legislative elections and for the first round of presidential elections which just took place, the female representation rate decreased to 8%. However, thanks to the quota, women represented at least a third of the candidacies for the municipal positions.

There is still a long way to go to ensure gender equity in the political arena in Haiti.

UNDP's support on promoting gender equality and women's participation in the electoral process

The UNDP project « Support to the Electoral Cycle in Haiti » aims in principle to strengthen the capacities of institutions linked to the electoral process in Haiti to ensure the organization of presidential, legislative, municipal and local elections so that they take place in conformity with the electoral calendar announced by the Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) on 12 March 2015 and in a free, transparent, credible and inclusive manner.

This initiative developed a gender mainstreaming strategy which has resulted in specific actions including: advocacy and strengthening the inclusion of more women as temporary electoral staff of the electoral body, contributing to women representing 30% of the 3,858 supervisors and 41,500 polling staff, and support to the information, awareness and civic education campaign to promote the active participation of voters, which had a special focus on women and young women. Through this campaign, more than 20,000 radio spots and 3,000 television spots were broadcasted during the period targeting the 9 August elections, in which one of the 7 themes was focused on encouraging the political participation of women.

During the period targeting the 25 October elections, UNDP in partnership with the CEP, UN Women, UNESCO and MINUSTAH launched a series of training entitled “Women and Elections” and “Youth and Elections” in the ten departments targeting representatives of women organizations and community youth leaders to become civic educators, who will in turn, train others following the principle of cascade training and to become vectors of civil society to incite other women and youth to vote. Up-to-date, 268 representatives of women associations and 745 youth leaders have been trained.

Another example of its work was the support on the gender mainstreaming for the electoral process with the development of tools to collect disaggregated data. Although the data treatment process will require some time, this action will enable the CEP to determine the participation rate of women voters for the first time in Haiti. Moreover, a civic education manual for the electoral body is being developed which focuses on approaches to increase the inclusion of women, youth and persons with disabilities among the electoral staff and promote accessibility within voting procedures.

UNDP partnered with UN Women, the Ministry of Women and the CEP, which implemented a series of activities: training for 74 journalists on neutral and gender-sensitive coverage; organization of an awareness campaign caravan for voters in 5 cities with the participation of more than 20,000 people; training and mobilization of 300 volunteers (80% female) representing women organizations from 10 departments in order to sensitize the population

(reaching about 15,000 people); and support to 150 women candidates to strengthen their candidacies.

UNDP also partnered with UNESCO, which implemented activities focused on promoting the participation of youth and young women in elections and a culture of peace and non-violence, in collaboration with a theater group, Les Rescapes and a youth group, the Haitian Coalition of Volunteers (COHAIV): About 20 theaters on “participation” and “electoral violence”, have been organized up-to-date, reaching about 6,000 citizens, women and men.

The project also supported the CEP in developing a memo on violence against women candidates, which was adopted by the institution and has been submitted to the Ministry of Justice for signature, and is expected to be widely disseminated to sensitize the authorities on this plight.

Despite all efforts, while waiting for the election results, it is clear that the improvement of this political representation gap will be only reached by implementing a systematic, continuous and long-term effort in the coming years.

