

October

*Indonesia elections 2019: Meeting at the  
Embassy of Indonesia in The Hague.*



In the wake of the upcoming general elections in Indonesia to be held in April 2019, Director Ms. Sabra Bano, together with team members Marcin Kromczyk and Dianti Kristi met with the Deputy Chief of Mission, Mr. Fikry Cassidy, at the Embassy of Indonesia in The Hague. The discussion mainly focused on the scope of observing elections from a gender perspective and contributing to further enhance the electoral participation of women in Indonesia.

When and where did women  
earn the right to vote?



New Zealand was the first country to allow women to vote, in **1893**, while the King Abdullah of **Saudi Arabia** granted women the right to vote in **2011**.

Mayor Souad Abderrahim the First Female  
Mayor of Tunis visits The Hague



Due to the special relationship that Gender Concerns International has with Tunisia, Gender Concerns' Director, Sabra Bano, participated last September in a Meet and Greet Event, co-hosted by the Embassy of Tunis to the Netherlands and VNG. The meeting provided an occasion to interact and exchange ideas on the challenges and opportunities at the local governance level. Mayor Souad Abderrahim is the first woman to ever hold such a position in Tunisia. Her success and ambition for the elections 2019 are inspirational. We look forward to supporting her leadership and the engagement with women and civil society organisations in Tunisia.

## Gender equality and the 2019 parliamentary elections in Ukraine



Ukraine remains politically determined to achieve a gender-balanced society. The country has endorsed major international agreements for gender equality, including the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Since the Ukraine-EU Association Agreement in 2014, the country revitalised its commitment to provide equal opportunities for men and women in economic, political, and educational spheres. In 2018 new legislation has been adopted through the State Social Programme on Equal Rights and Opportunities of Women and Men for the period up to 2021, aiming at bolstering the institutional mechanisms devised to ensure gender equality.

Despite the prominent international engagement, Ukraine still falls short in delivering its pledges. The status of women in the country is especially visible in the political sphere, where women are disproportionately underrepresented, constituting 54% of the population, but only 12% of the parliament. The current composition of the Ukrainian parliament is below the European average of 25.8%, as well as its own 30% gender quota. The unequal representation of women in parliament impedes the achievement of a gender-balanced society and does not contribute to alleviating the situation of women in other areas of life. It is thus essential to support women in achieving greater presence within the political decision-making circles of Ukraine, to improve gender equality and greater attentiveness to the fulfilment of international commitments stated above.

Gender Concerns International, in its goal to support women's full integration into electoral and policy-making processes, supports the efforts of Ukrainian women in determining their country future.

# Women's political participation and gender equality



Women's voices are still missing from the executive branches of governments and parliaments worldwide

IN ONLY 11 OUT OF 152 STATES (7,2%), WOMEN  
ARE HEADS OF STATE

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN  
PARLIAMENTS IS 25%

WOMEN IN POLITICS MAP. UN WOMEN, 2017.

## First team meeting at the new Head office



Gender Concern's head offices in the Hague has been relocated. The new office is located at **Benoordenhoutseweg 23, 2596 BA**, just a few blocks away from the previous building, and right across the Malieveld park. Please note that all our contact information remains the same, except for our visits and postal address.

## Next 20th of October, Afghanistan decides



The situation in Afghanistan is far from ideal; According to the UN, a total of 1,692 people have been killed in the first half of 2018, 14% of the country's districts are fully controlled by the Taliban, another 30% are contested, and multiple threats to the democratic process are present, including threats related to insecurity, voter registration and citizens' distrust in the democratic institutions. In this setting, Afghanistan parliamentary and district council elections are set to be held in October 20th, after more than three years of delays. In 2010 elections, due to the guarantee of women's political participation under Afghanistan's Constitution of 2004, 64 seats of the parliament were reserved for female representatives out of a possible 249 seats.

Moreover, the country is to hold presidential elections on April 20th 2019, for the fourth time since the Taliban were toppled from power in 2001. The previous presidential elections took place in 2014, and all of the 11 candidates were men.

Women in Afghanistan have been disproportionately affected by decades of economic and political instability. A culture of gender discrimination was further exacerbated by the rise of the Taliban, in which women and girls were subjected to continuous discrimination, marginalization and severe restrictions regarding access to education, healthcare and employment. When the Taliban fell, hopes were renewed for the re-emergence of equal rights and women's rights and the new government attempted to bring into realization these goals. However, in spite of the government's good intentions, the 2014 Gender Inequality Index ranked Afghanistan as number 171 out of 187 countries in terms of gender equality.

Gender Concerns International stresses the need for more capacity building programmes, in order to effectively include the voices of female parliamentarians in the political process. If female voices continue to be marginalized in the Afghan society, progressive reforms for the socio-political inclusion of women will be halted indefinitely.

## Women's rights activist Zahra Sepeh, running for parliamentary elections in Afghanistan



Zahra Sepeh started her career working as a journalist, writing extensively on issues related to Afghan women's rights. She was the first female presenter covering political affairs in Afghanistan, and she is the Director of a non-governmental organization called 'Development and Support of Afghan Women and Children' (DSAWCO), committed to women's empowerment and to create awareness of violence against women in Afghan society.

With Afghan parliamentary elections coming up, Zahra announced her candidacy. Election campaigns in Afghanistan are very difficult for women, who face a number of challenges, discriminations, and power struggles that make their winning particularly difficult. Gender Concerns International, in its goal for women's full integration into electoral and policy-making processes, as voters, candidates and electoral officials, celebrates the rising of female candidates who are committed to women's rights and to improving the overall situation of women in the country, as a significant step towards gender equality and towards gender-inclusive policy-making in Afghanistan.

# Women's political participation and gender equality

SOME OF THE MAIN CHALLENGES OF WOMEN WHO RUN FOR OFFICE:



## upcoming events: october

9-11	NAP Learning event and signatory meeting - Ministry of Foreign Affairs
12	Seminar and workshop about Women and Technology - Graduated Women International (GWI).
15	Conference on Experiential Expertise and Poverty Policy - FNV
16-18	Workshop for Analysis Makes the Difference - CCOE
29-2	Hostile Environment Awareness Training - SEPAT International
29-9	Training for Conflict, Rule of Law, and Security - The Hague academy for Local Government

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