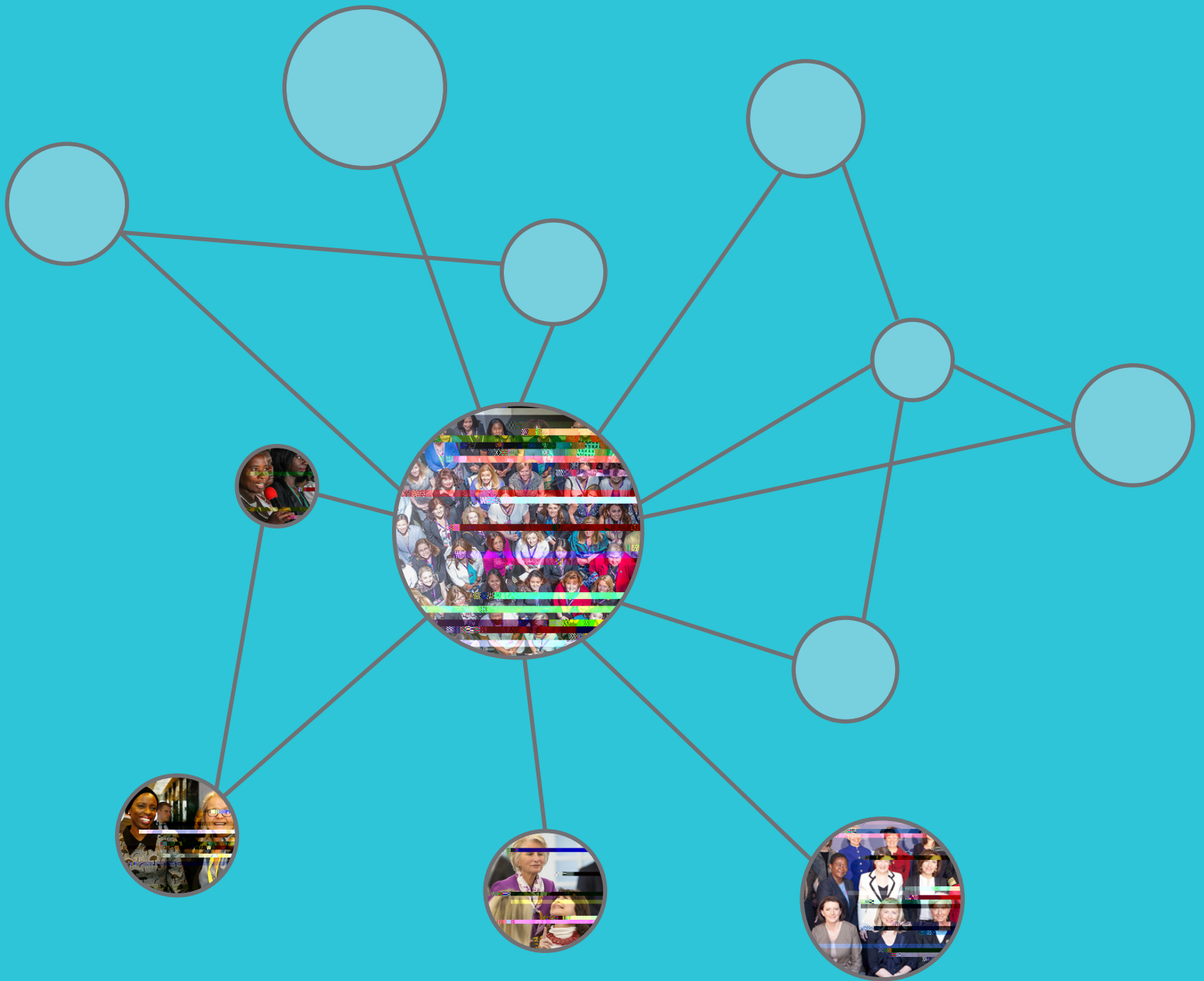Defning Leadership, Breaking Barriers, and Fostering Change

DESIGNING WOMEN'S POLITICAL NETWORKS
A TEN-STEP TOOLKIT

Gwen K. Young,

Marie A. Principe,
Program Associate
Althea Lloyd,
Program Coordinator
Ellysse Dick,
Communications Assistant

About the

The Women in Public Ser

global progress towards women's equal participation in policy and political leadership to create more dynamic and inclusive institutions that leverage the full potential of the world's population to change the way global solutions are forged.

Acknowledgements

Executive Summary

is paper seeks to understand the impact women's political networks have globally in supporting women overcome the universal cultural and structural barriers they face in engaging in a political career. With best practices from national, regional and international networks, this paper explores the role and modus operandi networks have adopted in supporting women running for national office in congressional or parliamentary elections, enhancing their effectiveness and shaping their leadership once in office. Through desk research of existing literature, interviews with women engaged in national politics and experts in this field, this paper also seeks to raise questions on the role of technology, the media and the correlation between women's participation in networks and their substantive representation.

About the Author

Lucina Di Meco is a Senior Gender Expert with more than 15 years of experience in the design, management and implementation of international development programs addressing gender inequality. Lucina has worked for the United Nations, as well as a wide range of international nonprofits and foundations, defending and promoting women's and girls' rights and empowerment in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Designing Women's Political Networks: A Ten-Step Toolkit

Background

According to Melanne Verveer, Executive Director of the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security and first ever US Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues at the U.S. Department of State from 2009 to 2013: "Women's networks are invaluable in providing female political aspirants with the tools they need to get elected, despite the many hurdles in their paths. Women's networks also make an enormous difference in enabling female legislators to meet across party lines, share experiences and tools on how to successfully advance gender equality policies. In order to make significant progress on women's political empowerment, we need a lot more of such networks.[1]"

If women's political networks are defined as a set of critical actors working to increase women's political participation, recruitment and leadership and the relations among them, what are the conditions that make such networks successful?

While guidelines have been developed by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the United Nations

- Why do we need more women in o ce?
- Why are women's networks helpful to increase female political participation?
- In which way will your network meet the most pressing needs of the community?

- Which barriers will your network focus on?
- Why are you focusing on them speci cally?
-

Roadmap: Designing your Women's Political Network

- What activities will most e ectively enable you to achieve your goals?
- Which ones will you invest more time and resources on? Why?
- How do these activities link to your mission and vision?

- How will the leadership be chosen? For how long will leadership serve?
- Who will be responsible for which tasks?
- When and how will decisions be made? Will there be a necessary quorum? Will virtual presence be counted? Will you vote openly or con dentially?

- Who will work for your network part-time/full time on a paid or voluntary basis?
- Do you receive donations? From whom? How much?
- What are your expenditures? How are they linked to your outcomes and outputs?

- Who are your audiences? How will you communicate with them? What is your individualized "Why should I care?" message for each one of them?
- Which technological tools (social media, website, etc.) will you use and how?
- How will you defend your members from online harassment and threats?

- How do you de ne and measure success in the short, medium and long term?
- How often will you re-evaluate and adapt your strategy according to the results you have achieved?
- Do you have quantitative and/or qualitative indicators to measure your success?

Why a Women's Political Network?

expand women's political representation by increasing the supply and/or demand of women in politics; facilitate a dialogue between women elected in office and civil society organizations; inform women's political leadership; challenge existing societal norms on women's political participation and support women in overcoming the barriers that make it difficult for them to pursue a political career. Before starting a women's political network, you should get familiar with the best practices from existing networks in achieving each one of these goals, so that you can make an evidence-based argument regarding the importance of women's networks. It is also important to know why gender parity in politics matters: whether you chose the critical mass approach, a rights-based approach or a combination of both, you should familiarize yourself with evidence-based arguments and data on why women's increased political participation brings about important change in legislation and society. Finally, your motivations and, if possible, information should be grounded in your social and political reality and the specific needs you want to address.

Why do we need more women in office?

Why are women's networks helpful to increase female political participation?

In which way will your network improve, directly and indirectly, the most pressing needs of the community? n why

What will you Do?
Define the Network's Activities.

training and mentoring of female political aspirants; facilitating the discussion across sectors and among various stakeholders on important policy issues related to gender equality; and advocacy to raise visibility for certain issues.

Your network's activities can include some or all of the above mentioned, or totally different ones. Activities can also vary over time, in response to the changes in the political situation and as you modify your strategic plan. In all cases, however, your activities must be clearly linked to your theory of change.

Which activities will most effectively enable you to achieve your short, medium and long term goals? Which ones will you invest more time and resources on?

Why are you prioritizing this set of activities?

How do these activities link to your mission and vision?

inclusive decision-making and transparent criteria for accessing positions of power. Also, because political participation is not only an outcome, but also a process, leadership changes provide foundational training opportunities for women who aim at engaging in a political career.

Whether you rely on volunteers or salaried members, make sure you take into account and periodically evaluate their availability and their capacity to perform the required tasks.

How will the leadership be chosen? What terms of service or time limits apply to the leadership?

Who will be responsible for which tasks (including fundraising, communication, political outreach, research and office administration)?

When and where will decisions be made? Will there be a necessary quorum? Will virtual pres4o1cMC /Span-

List all the agencies, services and programs that might be available to support your work and reach out to them. If you receive international funding, you should encourage international donors to consider developing a holistic approach to supporting women's networks through the political cycles, overcoming old practices of dividing funds into categories that do not

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One Woodrow Wilson Plaza
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004