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Political finance and the equal participation of women in Colombia: a situation analysis

Kevin Casas-Zamora and Elin Falguera



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Abbreviations

AICO	Movement of Indigenous Authorities of Colombia (Movimiento de Autoridades Indígenas de Colombia)
ASI	Independent Social Alliance (Alianza Social Independiente)
FARC	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia)
GDP	Gross domestic product
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
MOE	Electoral Observation Mission (Misión de Observación Electoral)
MIRA	Independent Movement for Absolute Renewal (Movimiento Independiente de Renovación Absoluta)
MAIS	Indigenous and Social Alternative Movement (Movimiento Alternativo Indígena y Social)
NIMD	Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy
NEC	National Election Council (Consejo Nacional Electoral)

Introduction

The impact of economic resources on the political participation of women has become a prominent issue in the field of comparative political finance. In recent years, there has been a growing recognition that politics dominated by money is, more often than not, politics dominated by men. According to the final report of the Global Conference on Money in Politics, held in Mexico City in September 2015, ‘lack of financial resources is widely recognized as one of the key barriers to the political participation of women, whose access to business networks and to the disbursement of public funding within party structures is normally very limited’ (International IDEA et al. 2015: 13; Ballington and Kahane 2014).

It is not surprising that the issue has moved to the forefront of debates on gender and political finance. Its prominence is the result of two factors. First, the renewed global interest in growing inequality has directed attention to the ways in which money in politics can subvert not just electoral fairness but, more fundamentally, the value of political equality that underpins democracy. Concern for the impact of money on female political participation is an important part of a broader and more far-reaching conversation about the challenges that money poses for political equality.

Second, there is the acknowledgement that if gender parity in the political sphere is to be achieved, there is a pressing need to consider the introduction of a new wave of affirmative action measures that build on the representation quotas

that are rapidly spreading across the world.¹ While it is clear that gender representation quotas have visibly enhanced the prospects of women holding elected office, it is just as evident that this progress has been mostly confined to national legislatures, as opposed to executive positions and subnational bodies (Casas-Zamora, Muñoz-Pogossian and Vidaurri 2014). Even in the best of cases, political gender parity is a long way away and will remain so until other obstacles to women’s political participation are acknowledged and tackled.

This report assesses the extent to which political finance is a significant obstacle to women running for political office. It focuses on the experience of Colombia, a country that, like many other Latin American countries, continues to struggle with the legacies of pervasive social, economic and political inequality that disproportionately affect women.

The report is part of a broader effort by International IDEA to understand the impact of political finance on women. It has been produced under the Respect for Women’s Political Rights Programme (WPR Programme) developed by International IDEA, the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty

¹ According to International IDEA (2014: 16), ‘some 118 countries and territories— more than half of all—use some type of gender quota for elected office ... [and] 60 countries and territories/special areas around the world use legislated candidate quotas (which may be used in conjunction with reserved seats or voluntary party quotas)’.

Democracy (NIMD) and other partners. This four-year programme (2014–17) aims to strengthen the political leadership of women in three countries—Colombia, Kenya and Tunisia—by improving the political environment for equal participation and leadership of women and men in political parties.

The WPR Programme works directly with political parties in the above-mentioned countries to:

- Assess, reform and transform both formal and informal barriers that impede and discourage progress on gender equality and women's political rights;
- Enhance the capacity of women candidates, as well as men and women politicians in general to be more effective fundraisers, campaigners, and leaders; and
- Build political parties' institutional capacities on gender-sensitive policymaking and legislation.

The study has two main objectives. First, it explores the role of political finance in hindering women's access to political power and its relative weight vis-à-vis other obstacles to women's political participation. Second, it suggests a number of institutional changes that might ameliorate some of the problems identified, while being fully cognizant of the limits to institutional change recasting deep-rooted gender imbalances.

The report is based on a detailed review of Colombia's legal framework for political parties and campaign finance, as well as the fairly scant sources dealing with the issue of women's political participation from the standpoint of political finance.² More importantly, the study systematizes the patterns identified and lessons learned from 19 interviews with a variety of political actors and experts, including elected and retired politicians, party officials, electoral authorities, journalists and political donors.³ These interviews were carried out in Bogotá in the first week of December in 2015, using a semi-open questionnaire. All but one of the

conversations were recorded, and in all cases they are quoted with the consent of the interviewees.

The chapters that follow contain obvious limitations and caveats. Research on the subject matter and on campaign finance in general is hampered by the opacity of political finance information in Colombia. Despite valuable efforts to increase levels of transparency—of which the digital application *Cuentas Claras* (Clear Accounts) is the best—official political party and campaign accounts are universally regarded as unreliable and merely the tip of the iceberg in terms of undeclared levels of income and expenditure. This leaves no option but to use largely qualitative methods to gauge the impact of money on female political participation. It should also be noted that the report places more emphasis on the institutional hurdles to women's access to power than the cultural ones, simply because the former are more amenable to reform in the short run.

Chapter 1 provides background information on Colombia and its political development. Chapter 2 focuses on political finance regulation and practice in the country; and Chapter 3 on the evolution of and current situation for women's participation in Colombian politics. Chapter 4, which is in many ways the core of the report, analyses the role of political finance and other factors in blocking women's path to elected office. The report concludes with policy implications and recommendations drawn from the research.

² The only source solely dedicated to the issue of gender participation in Colombia through the lens of political finance is Londoño (2016). This report, however, focuses exclusively on the role of public funding in assisting women's political participation.

³ For a list of the names and roles of the interviewees see the Annex.

1. Colombia's political institutions and development

The Republic of Colombia was founded in 1819 when the country gained its independence from Spanish colonial rule. At 1,138,910 square kilometres, it is the 26th-largest country in the world. It has a population of 46.7 million. Colombia is considered a middle-income country; its gross domestic product (GDP) per capita was USD 7,904 in 2014 (World Bank 2016). The country's poverty rate has visibly declined in recent years, but it still suffers from acute levels of economic inequality.⁴ At 0.535, its Gini Coefficient is one of the world's highest. According to some estimates, the richest 1 per cent of the population controls over 40 per cent of the country's wealth (World Bank 2016).⁵ Socio-economic inequality shapes Colombia's political institutions and mores in multiple ways.

Colombian political institutions are dominated by the executive branch, which has its seat in the capital, Bogotá, and represents the country's 32 departments and one capital district. Colombia's political system is a presidential one, in which the president is elected, for a single four-year term, by an absolute majority of those voting, with a second round of voting if required. The legislative branch consists of a bicameral Congress, comprised of a 102-seat Senate and a 166-seat House of Representatives. Members of both are elected for four-year terms by proportional representation in multi-member constituencies. Party lists are used, although independent candidates are allowed to run if they can collect a sufficient number of signatures as nominations. Senators are elected in a single nationwide constituency. Representatives are elected in 33 constituencies, where each department and the capital district forms a constituency.⁶ One

⁴ Data from the World Bank shows poverty has declined steadily from nearly 47 per cent of the population living below the poverty line in 2004 to 28.5 per cent in 2014 (World Bank 2016).

⁵ The Gini Coefficient is a widely used income inequality indicator, which ranges from 0 (total equality) to 1 (total inequality).

⁶ In the Chamber of Representatives there are also 4 seats reserved for the representation of Afro-Colombians, indigenous population and Colombians living abroad. In the Senate, there

peculiar aspect of the Colombian electoral system is that political parties can choose whether to use closed or open lists or a mix of the two. In the 2014 legislative elections, seven of the nine parties chose to run with open lists.⁷ The electoral system is as much a reflection as a cause of the weakness of parties, which leads to a candidate-centred political dynamic where individual access to money, the media and networks is fundamental to electoral success. Colombia has a vibrant if fragmented party system. There are 13 parties registered at the national level, spanning the entire ideological spectrum.⁸ In 2016, 10 parties were represented in the Senate, and 15 parties were present in the House of Representatives.

Colombia boasts one of Latin America's longest traditions of republican government, party politics, civilian rule and regular elections. These traits have co-existed, however, with a history of oligarchic practices, patronage and political violence, as well as a pervasive presence of armed non-state actors. From the mid-19th century, the political system was dominated by the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party, both of which were tightly controlled by wealthy elites, leading to a political dynamic that one author described as that of 'conversations among gentlemen' (Wilde 1978). It was not until the enactment of a new Constitution in 1991—drafted with the explicit intention of disseminating power and opening up the political system—that the stranglehold of Liberals and Conservatives over the political system subsided.⁹ The oligarchic practices that long defined the Colombian political system were compounded by the chronic use of patronage. A quid-pro-quo approach to politics, where elected politicians hand out individual benefits in return for political support, continues to be the bread and butter of Colombian politics (Barón 2015).

The political violence that has afflicted the country, almost continuously, for nearly 70 years has been, if anything, even more problematic for democracy. In 1948, following the murder of Liberal caudillo Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, the Liberal–Conservative split gave way to one of the most serious bouts of political violence in Latin America's history, simply known as *La Violencia*, which lasted until 1958 (Bailey 1967). Later, deep-rooted grievances related to the distribution

are 2 seats reserved for the representation of indigenous people. See Constitución Política de Colombia, articles 171 and 176.

⁷ Only the Movimiento Independiente de Renovación Absoluta (Independent Movement for Absolute Renewal [MIRA]) and the Partido Centro Democrático (Democratic Centre Party [CD]) used closed lists. See *El Tiempo* (2014b).

⁸ As of 2015 the registered parties were: *Partido Liberal Colombiano* (Colombian Liberal Party), *Partido Conservador Colombiano* (Colombian Conservative Party), *Partido Social de Unidad Nacional – Partido de la U* (Social Party of National Unity - U Party), *Partido Centro Democrático* (Democratic Centre Party), *Alianza Verde* (Green Alliance), *Polo Democrático Alternativo* (Alternative Democratic Pole), *Movimiento de Autoridades Indígenas de Colombia* (Movement of Indigenous Authorities of Colombia), *Movimiento Alternativo Indígena y Social* (Indigenous and Social Alternative Movement), *Alianza Social Independiente* (Independent Social Alliance), *Partido Opción Ciudadana* (Citizen's Option Party), *Partido Cambio Radical* (Radical Change Party), *Movimiento Independiente de Renovación Absoluta* (Independent Movement of Absolute Renovation), and *Unión Patriótica* (Patriotic Union).

⁹ It is worth noting that the 1991 Constitution also created strongly decentralized political structures, just short of a federal system (Pening-Gaviria 2003). For some implications of this for political finance see Perdomo (2016).

of land resulted in the emergence of the most influential militant leftist group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), which has been engaged in peace talks with the Colombian government since 2012. These led to a bilateral ceasefire, which was signed in June 2016. For an extended period the country suffered from armed conflict that pit the Colombian Government, left-wing guerrilla armies, right-wing paramilitary groups and crime syndicates against each other, in a dizzyingly complex dynamic, where effective control of territory by the Colombian state has been challenged in vast swaths of the country.

In addition, over time, the political grievances at the base of the conflict were compounded by the explosive growth of drug production and trafficking, which from the 1970s added an extra layer of violence and an even more serious challenge to Colombia's political institutions. Extensive ties have frequently been exposed between political and criminal elements in Colombia, with damaging consequences for democratic institutions (Briscoe, Perdomo and Uribe-Burcher 2014: Chapter 5). The two most serious examples of this are the proven involvement of drug cartels in the financing of former President Ernesto Samper's campaign in 1994 and the emergence in the mid-2000s of pervasive links between elected politicians and right-wing paramilitary groups in a scandal known as *Parapolítica*. The latter episode led to the investigation of hundreds of members of Congress and to the conviction of over 60 people between 2007 and 2013.¹⁰

These examples already hint at the complexities involved in political finance in the Colombian context. In fact, as the following chapter shows, the problematic nature of political finance practice in the country bears little resemblance to the fairly thorough regulations introduced over the past three decades.¹¹

¹⁰ On Samper's case see Vargas, Lesmes and Tellez (1996) and *Semana* (1997). On *Parapolítica* see *Verdadabierto.com* (2010) and Alfaro (2007). On both see Rubio (2013).

¹¹ The first set of political finance rules in Colombia was drafted in 1985 (Law No. 58 of 1985).

2. Political finance in Colombia: rules and practice

As in other Latin American countries, the regulation of political finance in Colombia has reached a level of sophistication only matched by its highly uneven implementation. On paper, successive constitutional amendments, legal reforms and rulings from the National Election Council (NEC) and the Constitutional Court have shaped a comprehensive legal framework where private and public sources of funding, election expenses, transparency mechanisms, media access for candidates, and sanctions against violations are all the subject of detailed treatment. The key legal instruments in this framework are: the Constitution of 1991, articles 107–11; Law No. 130 of 1994, on the basic norms for political parties and movements, their funding, their election campaigns and other aspects; Law No. 1475 of 2011, on the organization and functioning of political parties and movements, and electoral processes; Law No. 996 of 2005, on presidential elections; and the rulings issued by the NEC before each election. The main features of the current regulations are summarized in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1. Key features of political finance regulation in Colombia

Public funding	Recipients	Candidates, political organizations, significant groups of citizens
	Timing	Pre-election financing (subject to guarantees) Post-election reimbursement of expenses Annual funding for parties' permanent activities
	Eligibility rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-election financing Presidential candidates of parties with 4 per cent of votes for Senate or House of Representatives; Presidential candidates from new parties supported by signatures of at least 3 per cent of total votes in the previous election; At other levels all candidates are entitled to pre-election financing. Post-election reimbursement Presidential elections: all candidates. Congressional elections: 50 per cent of electoral threshold; Gubernatorial, mayoral elections: 4 per cent of votes; Permanent funding All political parties duly registered are entitled.

Table 2.1. [Cont.]

Public funding	Allocation rules	<p>Pre-election financing: up to 80 per cent of spending cap</p> <p>Post-election reimbursement: payment per vote obtained</p> <p>Permanent funding: 10 per cent will be distributed in equal parts among all parties duly registered; 15 per cent among parties with more than 3 per cent of votes for Senate or House of Representatives; 40 per cent according to seats obtained in previous election; 15 per cent according to seats obtained in previous municipal election; 10 per cent according to seats obtained in previous departmental elections; 5 per cent according to the proportion of women elected by the party at all levels; 5 per cent according to the number of young persons elected by the party at all levels.</p>
	Amount definition procedure	<p>Pre-election financing is a proportion of the spending cap defined by the NEC</p> <p>Post-election reimbursement per vote defined by NEC, indexing the amounts established by Law No. 130 since 1994</p>
	Other regulations	<p>Public funding for permanent party activities should be primarily directed to: the functioning of party structures; research and training activities; support for party legislative caucuses; dissemination of programmes; promotion of direct internal democracy; and the effective inclusion of women, young people and ethnic minorities</p> <p>Parties must allocate at least 15 per cent of annual public funding to research and training activities and the inclusion of women, young people and ethnic minorities</p>
Private funding	Anonymous	Banned
	Foreign	Banned, except resources from international cooperation to support party organizations
	National	<p>Presidential campaigns: up to 20 per cent of spending cap may come from individuals; no individual may contribute more than 2 per cent of total; relatives of candidates may contribute up to 4 per cent of total</p> <p>Other campaigns: contributions from individuals and legal entities are allowed, but no contribution can exceed 10 per cent of the total amount of private funding raised by the campaign contributions from the candidate and relatives are not subject to limits</p>
	Other regulations	<p>Contributions from illicit groups are banned</p> <p>Contributions from firms that receive than 50 per cent of their income from state contracts or subsidies are banned</p>
Expenditures	General spending ceilings	Yes
	Media advertising ceilings	Yes
	Duration of official campaign	3 months
Transparency rules	Contributions	<p>Parties and political movements must submit annual reports on their income to the NEC</p> <p>Parties, candidates and significant groups of citizens must report their contributions 2 months after the election</p> <p>Candidates and campaign managers must report their contributions to their party one month after the election</p>

Table 2.1. [Cont.]

Transparency rules	Expenses	Parties and political movements must submit annual reports on their expenses to the NEC Parties, candidates and significant groups of citizens must report their expenses 2 months after the election Candidates and campaign managers must report their expenses to their party one month after the election
	Audit	Yes, by the NEC National Financial Regulator oversees use of campaign accounts
	Publicity	Financial reports are public All the parties and candidates must submit their reports through the digital platform Cuentas Claras (Clear Accounts).
Access to media	Presidential candidates are entitled to 2 minutes per day per television broadcaster (private and state-owned) and 4 minutes per day per radio broadcaster (private and state-owned) during the campaign Candidates, parties and significant groups of citizens are entitled to free advertising on state-owned and private media for 2 months prior to the election, as per the allocation made by the NEC	
Enforcement	Sanctions	Loss of public funding and access to state-owned media; prohibition on registering candidates; temporary suspension and cancellation of party registration if parties are found guilty of violations of political finance rules Election can be annulled if a candidate is found to have violated contribution or spending limits
	Liable parties	Parties, candidates, party board members, party internal auditor

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Sources: Constitution of Colombia of 1991; Law No. 130 of 1994; Law No. 1475 of 2011; Law No. 996 of 2005; NEC ruling 3097/2013.

Table 2.1 describes a mixed system of election financing that legislates for a predominantly publicly funded system of presidential elections. It is a system where state subsidies are available to political parties and candidates before the election, and on an annual basis. The latter provision is crucial for the purposes of this study. The Colombian system earmarks 15 per cent of the parties' permanent subsidies for the promotion of research and training activities and the effective inclusion of young people, ethnic minorities and women.¹² However, this provision is not extended to campaign funding.

Private sources of income are tightly regulated, as are expenses.¹³ Caps on general spending and media advertising are meticulously defined to the cent by the NEC. Transparency rules are relatively lax, however, combining annual financial reports by the parties with electoral reports that are due only after the election. The campaign finance reports are open to the public, and increasingly

¹² The literal translation of the relevant norm reads: 'In all cases, parties and movements will allocate in their annual budgets a sum not less than 15 per cent of the corresponding state funding to the activities of their research centres, to provide political and electoral training courses, and for the effective inclusion of young people, women and ethnic minorities in the political process' (Law no. 1475 of 2011, article 18, paragraph 9).

¹³ See the detailed comparative tables of the Money, Politics and Transparency Database at <<http://moneypoliticstransparency.org>>.

available through the mandatory use of the digital application *Cuentas Claras*.¹⁴ The regulations on access to the media are fundamentally sound, granting candidates and parties basic access to both state-owned and private sector media outlets. Finally, sanctions are limited but include the extraordinarily severe option of revoking an electoral victory if a winning candidate is found to be in violation of the political finance laws. All in all, it is a fairly comprehensive framework that, on paper, is geared towards guaranteeing reasonably equitable electoral conditions, promoting the political participation of disadvantaged groups and curbing the undue influence of money—particularly money from questionable sources—on the political process.

However, to a greater extent than in most countries, the reality of political finance in Colombia deviates dramatically from the legal provisions. The legal framework reflects successive attempts made over 30 years by the political system to react to the tumultuous dynamics of Colombian politics, which is characterized by the widespread involvement of illicit actors in the funding of campaigns.¹⁵ This presence compounds the problems derived from the country's wide economic inequalities and complex geography, which tends to create political fiefdoms dominated by wealthy family clans. The Colombian experience of political finance regulation is, to a large extent, a succession of failures to break away from the fundamental inequities of the country's political system, its profound opacity, and the disturbing intertwining of a large part of its political elite with criminal actors. Neither the embarrassing evidence derived from the investigation into the Samper affair nor the grave revelations from the *Parapolítica* scandal were able to shock Colombian political actors into effectively curbing the role of illicit money in politics. Legal provisions notwithstanding, opacity and inequity remain the overwhelming traits of political finance in Colombia.

A cursory review of some of the information available on the 2014 Congressional election allows us to see some of the main traits of the Colombian political finance system in practice. There was near universal adoption of *Cuentas Claras* by candidates for the legislature in the run-up to the 2014 election. In a step that was widely acknowledged as important progress, 93 per cent of candidates used it to report their sources of funding and expenses (Transparencia por Colombia 2014: 39). Estimating the real cost of election campaigns in Colombia remains nearly impossible, however, as under-reporting of expenses is commonplace, and one expert has gone so far as to estimate that the real cost of campaigns is 10 times greater than the officially declared amounts (León 2015). The spending caps defined by the NEC do little to bring clarity to the issue, bearing little contact with reality. Thus, for instance, before the 2014 election the NEC fixed the nationwide spending cap for each Senate list at approximately USD 16 million, only to revise it considerably upwards in the face of determined opposition from political parties, which argued that the amount was unrealistically low. The

¹⁴ See NEC ruling no. 3097 of 2013. Parties are also subject to the Transparency and Access to Information Law (Law no. 1712 of 2014), which compels them to publish crucial internal information, including their annual budgets.

¹⁵ Rubio (2013) offers a fascinating account of this process.

cap was then fixed at USD 38.6 million.¹⁶ Remarkably, when the spending declarations were submitted after the election, no party declared expenses of more than a quarter of the spending limit (Transparencia por Colombia 2014: 54–59).¹⁷ In the light of informed estimates that put the average cost of a Senate campaign at approximately USD 1.5 million per candidate, per list, with some candidates spending up to USD 6 million, it is easy to see why there are reasons to be sceptical about the value of the declared figures (Cifras y Conceptos 2014).

If there is precious little accurate information about the sums spent on election expenses in Colombia, even less is known about the genuine sources of campaign funding. Perhaps the only certain fact is the limited relevance of the public funding system, which is borne out even by the unreliable official figures. While candidates for the Senate and the House of Representatives declared USD 106 million in contributions, the NEC only authorized the disbursement of USD 23.4 million in public subsidies in the run-up to the election (Transparencia por Colombia 2014: 45). Of the latter amount, just USD 6.5 million was actually claimed by candidates for the legislature, due partly to the belated disbursement of the funds by the NEC and partly to the cumbersome process for accessing the subsidy, as noted in the reports by the Organization of American States (OAS) election observation mission (OAS 2014: 3–6; Barrios 2015).¹⁸

Only 20 per cent of candidates accessed pre-election funding, which amounted to just 6 per cent of total declared funding sources. Even according to the warped official figures, Colombian candidates for the legislature declared that 70 per cent of their funding was raised privately (Transparencia por Colombia 2014: 45). A large part of the latter almost certainly comes from the candidate's own pocket or those of their immediate relatives.¹⁹ The source of the remainder of the private sector funds is a matter of conjecture. Large private conglomerates are known to contribute across the board and at all levels, often giving identical amounts to all candidates deemed worthy of support (Hoyos 2015; Transparencia por Colombia 2014: 49; *La Silla Vacía* 2014). To this must be added the obscure but widely acknowledged funding mechanisms derived from the collusion between incumbent politicians and public works contractors, as well as other illicit sources often hidden under the blanket of contributions made by not-for-profit organizations (León 2015; Transparencia por Colombia 2014: 49–50; Arenas 2015). In-kind contributions are also widely used, and hardly ever reported in full

¹⁶ Spending ceilings for lists for the Chamber of Representatives varied depending on the constituency, ranging from about USD 8 million in Bogotá to USD 0.6 million in rural departments such as Guaviare or Amazonas.

¹⁷ All the figures in this section have been converted into USD using the prevailing exchange rate in May 2014: Col\$ 1920 equals US\$1.

¹⁸ For instance, in the run-up to the 2015 local elections, candidates were, among many other requirements, expected to produce an insurance policy from an established financial entity to back 100 per cent of the amount claimed in pre-election subsidies (NEC ruling 1646/2015).

¹⁹ According to official figures, 37 per cent of total funding declared by candidates for the legislature comes from their own resources or those of their families (Transparencia por Colombia 2014: 45). The unreliability of official information notwithstanding, Lewin (2015), writing on the declared finances of the candidates for the mayoralty of Bogotá in 2015, gives a good idea of the use of different sources by candidates for public office in Colombia.

(Transparencia por Colombia 2014: 55–59). In addition, there is the critical role played by banks in providing credit leveraged by the candidate's expectation of a given level of post-election reimbursement of expenses.²⁰ This system favours those parties, lists and candidates that have a demonstrably successful electoral record that lenders can trust.

Whatever the specific sources used, one glaring trend emerges from any review of political finance practices in Colombia: with the possible exception of parties that have adopted closed lists, where centralized fundraising practices are widespread, Colombian national and local candidates are largely responsible for funding their own electoral campaigns. In nearly all cases, neither the state, nor the parties' central offices can provide economic assistance to a financially deprived candidate. Representative Clara Rojas of the Liberal Party made this point with clarity: 'A person who doesn't have resources is unable to campaign. ... When the party recruits you and tells you "You won't have to worry about the money" the reality is that you have to worry a lot. They try to support you in some ways, but that support is minimal. If I had counted on my party's support to pay for the people that you need to hire for your campaign, such as accountants, media specialists and the team that organizes your schedule, that would have been the end for me' (Rojas 2015; see also Barrios 2015, Blel 2015, Córdoba 2015, Iguarán 2015, López-Obregón 2015, Pantoja 2015, Ungar 2015). As is discussed below, this exclusionary dynamic belies the intention of public funding and hampers the aspirations of female candidates in particular.

While private funding sources clearly predominate during campaigns, the situation is often slightly different with regard to political parties' ordinary expenses, where public subsidies appear to be more relevant. A recent estimate, based on parties' declared figures, demonstrates their high levels of dependency on state funding during non-election years. Thus, while in 2012 public funding provided an average of 85 per cent of income to parties in Colombia, the figure fell to a still very high 69 per cent in 2013 (Londoño 2016: 19). These state resources deserve particular attention because they encompass the only two financial provisions conceived to stimulate the political participation of women in Colombia: the 5 per cent of total public funding allocated by the state according to the number of women elected by each party at all levels of political life; and the resources earmarked by parties (15 per cent of total state funds) for the promotion of the inclusion of women, young people and ethnic minorities in the political process.

The extent to which these two items achieve the aim of promoting the effective political participation of women is very much an open question. For a start, the amounts involved are quite limited. In 2014 the 5 per cent allocated by the state was equivalent to about USD 400,000, to be distributed among 12 parties, while the 15 per cent budgeted by parties to promote the inclusion of disadvantaged groups was slightly less than USD 1.2 million (Londoño 2016: 20–23). A 2012 study by the UNDP, International IDEA and the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) concluded that the parties allocated on average

²⁰ This is a common occurrence in systems where public funding is disbursed after elections on the basis of the election results. See the examples of Costa Rica and Uruguay in Casas-Zamora (2005).

two per cent of their budgets to the Women's Secretariat within each party and to women's empowerment activities (UNDP 2013). Even this would count as a significant form of affirmative action were it not for a crucial problem with the current legislation—the almost complete lack of control by the authorities over whether these resources are used for their declared purposes, a point to which we will return.

The latter issue is just one specific example of a more general problem that besets political finance regulation in Colombia: the endemic weakness of the NEC, which is entrusted by the Constitution (article 265) and the electoral law with the task of enforcing the numerous detailed provisions that shape the current normative framework.²¹ In reality, the NEC is hamstrung by fundamental problems, such as its lack of budgetary autonomy (its budget is an item within the congressional appropriation for Colombia's Civil Registry) and the politicized process for the appointment of its members, who are chosen directly by Congress and often committed to doing the bidding of political parties.²² Unsurprisingly, despite the widely acknowledged low levels of compliance with campaign finance regulations by parties and candidates, only a handful of investigations were initiated by the NEC after the 2014 legislative elections (Transparencia por Colombia 2014: 50–56).

With regard to the implementation of the media access rules, the legislation makes commendable efforts to grant all political parties and candidates—both presidential and congressional—a modicum of access to television and radio advertising during the three-month official campaign period. Moreover, in order to avoid favouritism of any kind, spaces are allocated by a ballot. These provisions notwithstanding, Colombian parties and candidates at all levels feel compelled to rely heavily on privately owned media conglomerates to get their message to voters. This is a major expense, typically the largest for most campaigns. According to the expenditure reported by parties in the run-up to the 2014 congressional election, 42 per cent of total campaign disbursements went to advertising of different kinds, the vast majority of it on television and radio (Transparencia por Colombia 2014: 58). This leaves aside the generous in-kind contributions often made by media conglomerates by lowering their advertising rates to specific candidates or parties, which can create significant inequalities during the course of a campaign.²³

Political finance in Colombia is thus defined by the visible gap between its detailed regulations and its lax practices. The avowed intentions of the law are belied by a reality in which both the sources of campaign funding and election expenses are highly opaque, rules are systematically violated with few obvious consequences, media access remains skewed, public funding and affirmative action mechanisms are rather limited and, above all, private money from wealthy

²¹ On the legal prerogatives of the NEC with regard to political finance see Londoño (2016: 26–29).

²² See the rankings of the Money, Politics and Transparency Database at <<http://moneypoliticstransparency.org>>. Colombia scores 50 out of 100 points when it comes to the independence of senior appointees in charge of monitoring political finance. This score is well below Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, Mexico, Panama and Uruguay.

²³ This phenomenon has been observed for a long time in countries such as Costa Rica, Guatemala and Uruguay (Casas-Zamora 2004).

sources—legitimate or not—continues to loom large over campaigns. For disadvantaged groups, including women but also other groups unconnected to wealthy strata, this amounts to an unforgiving landscape where the chance to compete is compromised from the start.

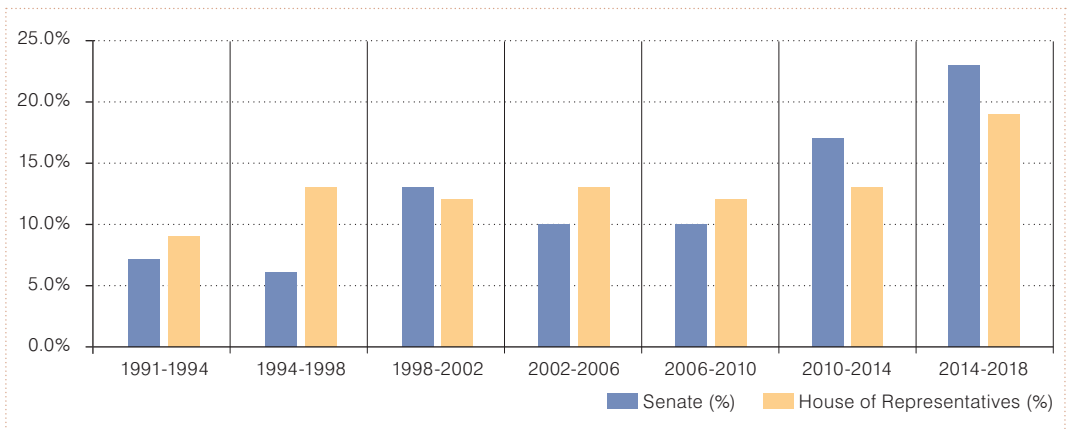
How all this affects women in particular, and whether the barriers apparently posed by political finance are greater than the other obstacles that stand in the way of gender parity, are questions examined in the following chapter, which briefly examines the history of women's political participation in Colombia. This history has been visibly affected by the adoption of gender representation quotas in 2011.

3. Women's political participation in Colombia

Colombia was one of the last countries in Latin America to allow women the right to vote, in 1954. Women have since struggled to penetrate the country's political system. In the 2014 presidential election, three women competed to be the first female President of Colombia. Unlike many other Latin American countries, such as Argentina, Brazil, Chile or Costa Rica, Colombia has to date not even had a female vice-president.

In the 2016 Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) world classification of women's political participation in parliaments, Colombia shares 91st place with Saudi Arabia (IPU 2016). From a historical perspective, the average level of women's participation in the House of Representatives in 1958–74 was 4.4 per cent. Some progress has been made in recent years, however, as is shown in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1. Women in the Colombian Congress, 1991–2018



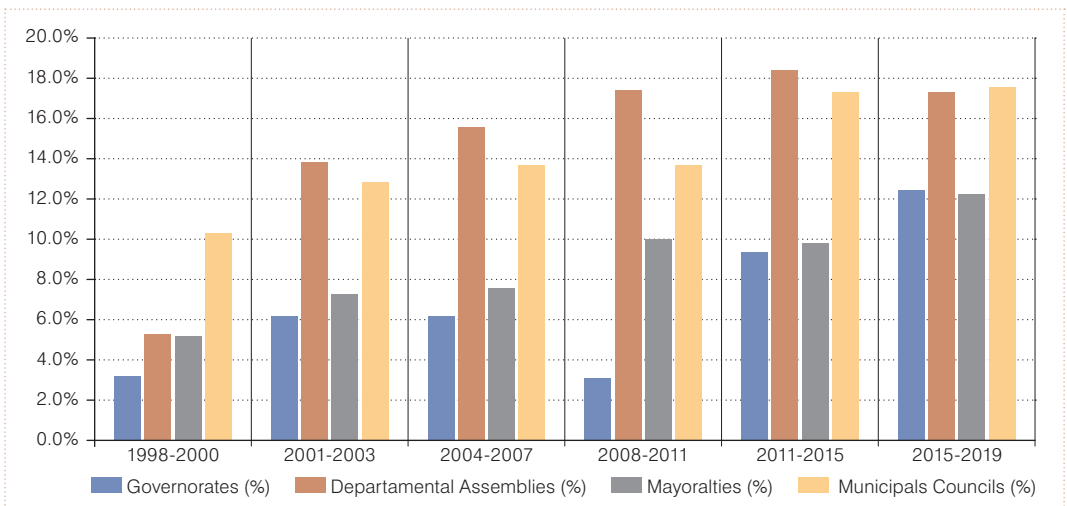
Source: MOE (2015a).

The percentage of women in the House of Representatives slowly increased from 9 per cent in 1994 to 13 per cent in 2010. A more rapid increase occurred in the Senate, where a 6 per cent share in 1994 rose to 17 per cent in 2010. To speed up the positive but somewhat stagnating trend, Colombia introduced legislated candidate quotas in 2011. The Colombian Electoral law stipulates that: 'For all lists submitted for election of 5 or more seats, at least 30 per cent of candidates of each gender must be included' (Law 1475 of 2011, article 28 [1]). After the quota was implemented, the proportion of women elected increased from 13 per cent to 19 per cent in the House of Representatives and from 17 per cent to 23 per cent in the Senate.

However, there is still a large gap between the number of women being nominated according to the 30 per cent quota requirement and the number being elected. At the start, in the 2014 Congressional election, only 14 department-sized constituencies—those with at least 5 seats—were legally obliged to comply with the gender quota. In three of those (Norte de Santander, Cundinamarca and Tolima) no women were elected to the House of Representatives. In addition, 19 constituencies across the country—those with less than 5 seats—remain exempt from complying with the quota. In 13 of those, no women have been elected to the Chamber of Representatives since 1991 (MOE 2015a).

Nor are local and regional level politics any easier for women to access (see Figure 3.2). The average level of representation of women in departmental assemblies and municipal councils between 1998 and 2019 was 14 per cent, in line with the figures for the National Congress during the same period. The introduction of electoral quotas in 2011 appears have had a limited impact at the local level, in the departmental assemblies and local councils where they have been applied. In other types of sub-national elections, the challenges faced by women are even greater. In 2015 only 15 per cent of the nominated candidates for gubernatorial and mayoral positions were women. Today, just 12 per cent of Colombia's governors and mayors are women. Tellingly, in 2015 no female candidate was elected to a mayoral position in any of the country's 32 department capitals (MOE 2015b; Registraduría Nacional).

Figure 3.2. Women elected to sub-national office in Colombia, 1998–2019



Source: Registraduría Nacional del Estado Civil [National Registry].

The situation inside political parties is even more complex. Parties could be regarded as gatekeepers of democracy and of women's participation in the political system. They serve as the channel through which women candidates are identified and provided with support to become elected representatives. The internal functioning of political parties, including candidate selection procedures, the financial support they offer to their candidates and how they support and encourage women's political careers, therefore has a huge impact on women's advancement as political leaders (OSCE 2014).

There are no mandatory quotas applied to political parties' internal structures in Colombia, although some groupings—such as the leftist Alternative Democratic Pole and the Patriotic Union—have adopted them voluntarily (López-Obregón 2015, Serna 2015).²⁴ The Green Alliance has proposed expanding current candidate quotas to parties' internal bodies so that, by 2018, 30 per cent of all party positions at all levels, including the executive bodies, will be comprised of women, increasing to 40 per cent in 2022 and 50 per cent in 2026. Under this proposal, 30 per cent of the party's financial resources would be used to support women within the party (López-Hernández 2015).

While the list of grievances felt by women inside political parties is long and nearly always justified, the available evidence suggests that the under-representation of women in Colombian political parties' executive bodies is less serious than other aspects of party life would suggest. Table 3.1. shows the composition of the executive body of most of the parties with a presence in the Chamber of Representatives. Somewhat remarkably, there is a higher representation of women in the parties' highest echelons than in the country's legislative bodies, despite the quota that applies to the latter's elections. Moreover, in at least two cases there is gender parity and even an over-representation of women. There seems to be no particular connection between a party's ideological leaning and its level of female participation in the leadership.

Political participation demands visibility. The lack of political parity experienced by Colombian women, the roots of which are analysed below, is mirrored by the female candidates' relative lack of media presence. No estimates are available about the use of paid electoral advertising by women candidates. However, inequities in media access go well beyond the imbalances generated by campaign advertising. As Clara López-Obregón, Colombia's current Minister of Labour and former presidential standard bearer of the left-wing Alternative Democratic Pole, put it: 'The funding of campaigns is a critical issue. It affects access to media advertising, particularly for disadvantaged groups, which include women, but go beyond women. Not just that: access to money also affects media coverage. All these things go hand in hand' (López-Obregón 2015).

²⁴ Article 18 of the internal statute of the Alternative Democratic Pole stipulates a 30 per cent quota for women in party bodies.

Table 3.1. Women's representation in political parties' executive bodies in Colombia, 2015

Political Party/Movement	Number of members of the Executive body	Number of women on the Executive body	Percentage of women in the Executive body
Radical Change Party	20	13	65
Independent Movement for Absolute Renewal (MIRA)	4	2	50
Democratic Centre	13	5	38.5
Colombian Conservative Party	30	10	33
Colombian Liberal Party	12	3	25
Social Party of National Unity (Partido de la U)	16	4	25
Alternative Democratic Pole	10	2	20
Indigenous and Social Alternative Movement (MAIS)	5	1	20
Citizen's Option Party	6	1	16.7
Green Alliance	8	0	0
Movement of Alternative Authorities of Colombia (AICO)	2	0	0
Independent Social Alliance (ASI)	3	0	0
Patriotic Union	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

Sources: Party websites and party offices.

In fact, it is media coverage that arguably generates the most serious visibility problems for women. Research carried out by the local NGO Electoral Observation Mission (*Misión de Observación Electoral*, MOE) in the wake of the 2014 Congressional and presidential elections found a systematic underrepresentation of women candidates in the news coverage of virtually every national media outlet. Remarkably, the proportion of the coverage allocated to women went down in 2014 despite the implementation of gender quotas for the first time, which increased the number of female candidates. Moreover, gender issues were nearly invisible in the press coverage of both elections (MOE 2014, vol. 1: 25–39, vol. 2: 18–25). This picture is confirmed by an International IDEA and UN Women study carried out in 2009–10, which found that Colombian women received zero coverage on the radio even though they made up 20 per cent of the candidates. On television, the coverage of women candidates was just 4.9 per cent (International IDEA and UN Women 2011: 44). Ultimately, as Senator Nadia Blel of the Colombian Conservative Party put it, 'Men control politics and men control the media. It is very difficult for a woman to penetrate such a system' (Blel 2015). The following chapter examines just how difficult it is and why.

4. Political finance and other hurdles facing women

That Colombian women are under-represented in politics is clear. Whether this is fundamentally attributable to political finance rules and practices, however, is less clear. In order to answer this question, it is necessary to focus first, on the factors that drive campaign finance decisions; second, on the effectiveness of existing affirmative action mechanisms in political parties; and, third, on the importance of the financial obstacles to women's participation vis-à-vis the other very real hurdles faced by women entering politics and before they even decide to become politically active. It turns out that, as with almost everything connected to political finance, the answer is less obvious than it seems.

Money and electoral viability

One of the most enduring truths about political finance is that money is seldom able to single-handedly define election outcomes. The flow of money into campaigns is not simply an exogenous factor that impacts politics. Rather, it usually reflects the donors' pre-existing perceptions about the parties' or candidates' ideological closeness and, above all, their electoral viability. Of course, the availability of money can in turn affect electoral viability. At the most basic level, however, votes rather than money are the primary currency of politics.

Colombia offers confirmation of this general principle. Both the placement of women candidates on party lists and the financial support from donors or political parties largely depend on perceptions of electoral viability. Angela Pantoja, a high-ranking officer at the Conservative Party's headquarters, described the calculation that goes into forming her party's lists:

At the moment of drafting the party lists for the Senate and the Chamber [of Representatives], the candidates' historic results and support, and whether he or she comes from a family that has been electorally important in a region are truly fundamental. ... In the make-up of the list we pay a lot of attention to electoral issues—how many votes can the person contribute in the region (Pantoja 2015; also León 2015).

While politically driven, the decision is nonetheless connected to financial considerations. Including electorally popular candidates on the lists is also a way to maximize the party's post-election reimbursement of expenses (Transparencia por Colombia 2014: 43). More importantly, the above quote hints at two of the fundamental factors that shape campaign finance dynamics—and political dynamics more generally—in Colombia: the oversized role of political families, on the one hand, and the cleavage between the 'ins' and 'outs' of the system, which only partially overlaps with the gender divide, on the other.

The dominance of local politics by influential political clans is a fact of life in Colombian politics. This has long been recognized as an important factor, but the aftermath of the *Parapolitica* scandal has provided a striking example of its endurance. In the past two election cycles, a remarkable number of politically inexperienced wives and relatives of imprisoned members of Congress were eventually elected to replace them (López-Montaña 2015, Robledo 2015, Ungar 2015).²⁵ For a woman (or a man) belonging to a powerful political family in a given region decisively improves the odds of being elected and, consequently, the ability to attract campaign resources. As Marta Lucía Ramírez, a former Senator, Minister and presidential candidate, put it:

There are many cases of women [politicians] that have been part of political families, who are elected not due to their own merits but because they are part of a political clan. That's happening a lot in the countryside. They are there not because they have knowledge of the state, or merits, or even a calling for public service, but simply because they are part of a family clan and a family business. ... For those women the experience of raising money for a campaign is not at all different from that of a man who comes from a political clan (Ramírez 2015; see also Barrios 2015, León 2015, López-Montaña 2015).

Elisabeth Ungar, Executive Director of *Transparencia por Colombia* (Transparency International's national chapter) and a long-term observer of corruption and gender issues in the country, confirms this judgment: 'There are many recently elected women—including some with very questionable credentials—who have had access to those networks of political support. ... They would have been elected regardless of their gender' (Ungar 2015).

None of this means, of course, that belonging to a political family is a prerequisite *sine qua non* for a woman to successfully attract contributions or be elected to office. Many women leaders defy the odds on the back of their pre-existing reputation, which makes them electorally viable despite being political outsiders (Cuartas 2015, López-Hernández 2015).

To the latter we have to add the power of incumbency as another factor that radically alters the financial and electoral viability of women, regardless of their political origins. As elsewhere, an incumbent politician generally has at his or her disposal many resources—financial or otherwise—that increase significantly

²⁵ It should be noted that this phenomenon is by no means limited to women. Men have also inherited political positions under the same circumstances. See *Las 2 Orillas* (2014) and *El Tiempo* (2014a).

the odds of electoral success. As Senator Claudia López-Hernández from the Green Alliance pointed out, 'while I think that differences in the capacity of women to access financial resources relative to that of men are always there, the gap diminishes a lot once a woman is elected, because in that situation the power you have does not come from your gender but from the office you occupy' (López-Hernández 2015). The power of incumbency has myriad manifestations. A crucial one is the opportunity to participate in decisions about the allocation of public works. This power places members of Congress and local officials, irrespective of their gender, at the heart of fundraising networks, which are often riddled with corruption, but critical to most campaigns in Colombia (León 2015, Valencia 2015).²⁶

All this suggests that women who are inside the political system, because they enjoy the support of a political clan or the advantages of incumbency, enjoy fundraising opportunities that are fundamentally similar to those of men in an equivalent situation. However, even in these cases, subtle differences remain and they tend to put women at a disadvantage. For instance, Idayris Yolima Carrillo, a current member of Colombia's electoral authority and former member of Congress, mentioned the awkwardness that often hovers over conversations between male donors and women candidates, an unpleasantness that many male donors prefer to avoid altogether: 'My perception is that campaign donors, the vast majority of whom are men, find it far more difficult to talk explicitly about quid-pro-quo with women' (Carrillo 2015). In other cases, when male donors decide to deal with female candidates, things may take a decidedly unsavoury turn: demanding sexual favours from women candidates in return for financial support is not unheard of (León 2015).

The weight of political families and that of incumbency both highlight the crucial line that divides the political fundraising game in Colombia—that between the political system's insiders and outsiders. The latter may include women, but also any candidate that faces long odds at the polls or is distrusted by the business interests that provide the bulk of electoral funding. Thus, new candidates, emerging leaders unsupported by an established political machine, and candidates on the left of the ideological spectrum all face significant fundraising hurdles, whether male or female (Iguarán 2015, López-Obregón 2015, Rojas 2015, Serna 2015).

The problem, of course, is that due to the relatively recent political inroads made by women in Colombia, the category of emerging leaders with limited political experience is largely made up of women. Not all women are outsiders. Nor are all outsiders women. Nonetheless, women have a far greater probability of being political outsiders than men. As one of our interviewees put it: 'When it is perceived beforehand that women candidates have less probability of being elected because they don't have the record, or because they don't have a political machine behind them, or because they are not well known, or because they can't devote as much time to political participation as men can, then they attract less funding. Why would donors bet on a candidate with low probabilities of getting elected?' (Ungar 2015). This highlights the conundrum neatly summarized by a party official: 'If a woman does not have an electoral history, it is very difficult for her to emerge politically' (Pantoja 2015; also Robledo 2015).

²⁶ On the role of women in illicit funding networks see Briscoe, Perdomo and Uribe-Burcher (2014: 68).

The financial plight of emerging female leaders is, thus, much more complex than that of women who run on the inside lane of Colombian politics. This is particularly true in those cases where the use of preferential voting makes individual candidates largely responsible for their financial and electoral success, as is the case in the vast majority of Colombian political parties. In these cases, emerging female candidates can expect no mitigation of their financial obstacles from their parties. As noted above, the material support that the parties' central organizations provide to individual candidates ranges from non-existent to insignificant. To the extent that parties facilitate this support, they do so according to the whims of party authorities rather than previously established rules. While there is a presumption that those resources will be allocated according to the perceived electoral viability of individual candidates, no information, and much less certainty exists about this in any Colombian party. This is, indeed, a general point about the Colombian parties' internal life. When it comes to both private and public sector funding, there is a total absence of explicit internal allocation rules (Cuartas 2015, León 2015, Pantoja 2015, Ungar 2015). In this, as in most other aspects of political finance in Colombia, opacity reigns.

The financial prospects for emerging female leaders appear slightly better in those parties that opt for closed lists. In the case of the Green Alliance in the 2010 Congressional election, the use of closed lists made for a more centralized fundraising operation and an electoral dynamic in which the individual candidates' financial prowess was far less relevant to their electoral chances than their place on the party list. This eased considerably the financial responsibilities borne by female candidates with limited political experience (Robledo 2015). The recent experience of the Democratic Centre Party, a highly centralized operation run by its founder, former President Alvaro Uribe, offers a similar lesson (Córdoba 2015, Valencia 2015). Unsurprisingly, several interviewees mentioned the adoption of closed lists with gender alternation as a key reform to enhance the representation of women (Barrios 2015, León 2015, López-Obregón 2015, Ramírez 2015, Robledo 2015).

Generally speaking, political finance does not create significant hurdles for *all* women. The real harm wrought on Colombian women candidates by political finance is more specific. A system where public funding of campaigns is relatively unimportant, where most candidates must fund their own electoral efforts, where party resources are allocated whimsically if at all, and where the flow of campaign funds is strongly driven by electoral history and prospects is one that makes it exceptionally difficult for new female leaders to emerge, unless they are connected to a political family. Even in the presence of gender representation quotas, nurturing fresh female political leadership and achieving gender parity in Colombia demand sophisticated forms of affirmative action, including on the financial front (Barrios 2015, Novoa 2015). Unfortunately, the current forms of financial affirmative action in the Colombian political system fall well short of what is required by a gender conscious democracy.

The weakness of affirmative action

Unless they are connected to a political family, Colombian women who want to enter politics are dealt a poor hand. The introduction of gender representation quotas is a reflection on the part of the political system of the steep odds that women face against breaking into a political system long dominated by men. So is the decision to earmark a share of political parties' annual state funding for the promotion and training of leaders from disadvantaged groups, including

women. This measure is the sole form of financial support geared to easing women's access to political power. However, its effectiveness is far from clear.

As shown in Chapter 3, the amounts allocated by parties to promote female leadership are very limited: in 2014 slightly more than USD 1 million was allocated by *all* parties for all the disadvantaged groups combined. Officials and leaders from different groupings, such as the Conservative Party, the Alternative Democratic Pole and the Patriotic Union, confirmed that at least a proportion of these resources is invested in training workshops for aspiring female politicians. The topics of the sessions range from general leadership skills, such as public speaking, to more applied training on the use of the *Cuentas Claras* financial reporting software (Iguarán 2015, López-Obregón 2015, Pantoja 2015, Serna 2015).

Nonetheless, there is a widespread perception among political actors, analysts and authorities that the available resources are poorly managed and invested, and therefore have a very limited impact. Above all, there is concern about the complete lack of legal controls over the effective use of these resources to promote female leadership. The general opinion is that in most cases this pool of money is simply put to other uses by party authorities, including the daily administration of party offices, the celebration of Mother's Day and even the purchase of flowers for events (Carrillo 2015, Cuartas 2015, López-Hernández 2015, Novoa 2015, Ramírez 2015, Ungar 2015). As Alejandra Barrios, the head of Colombia's most important election monitoring organization, observed: 'Yes, there are more resources for political parties that come from the 5 per cent [of annual public funding] distributed by the state [according to the representation of women], but the law does not say what these resources ought to be spent on. ... We should demand that those resources be explicitly spent on the training and education of women' (Barrios 2015).

Given the weakness of programmes to incentivize the emergence of female leaders, it is not entirely surprising that during the past election cycle, Colombian parties encountered problems meeting the gender quota demanded by the electoral law (Pantoja 2015, Valencia 2015). As Marta Lucía Ramírez observed, 'what we have seen after a few years of implementation of the gender quotas is that there are simply not enough women that have been trained on issues of public management so that we can fulfil those 30 per cent quotas. What we have today is a legal obligation that is almost impossible to comply with. The result of this is a perverse phenomenon—parties look for women and then use them to pad their lists, so that the party complies with the legal obligation while knowing full well that none of them will be elected (Ramírez 2015). The spurious use of women to pad party lists is acknowledged across the political system (Blél 2015, Rojas 2015, Valencia 2015; see also *El País* 2013).

For some observers, if Colombian political parties have problems filling gender quotas, they have only themselves to blame. It is the result of their lack of commitment to train female leaders (Robledo 2015, Ungar 2015). The low priority given to the promotion of women is a critical factor, but not the only one in what some female leaders and analysts call the 'lousy offer' made by parties to women—an offer that most women, even those genuinely interested in politics, find impossible to accept. Senator Claudia López-Hernández described the situation in eloquent terms that are worth quoting at length:

What is the offer that parties make to most women? First of all, the party reaches out to her one week before the deadline, only to tell her

that she should put her name and her capital on the line, and in return for that the party would only give her the authorization to register her candidacy under the party's banner. That's the offer. ... For 99 per cent of women, that is a losing offer from the outset. Things would be different if parties, two years prior to the election, reached out to me and told me: "Claudia, we would like you to join our school of political leadership and innovation, and we will subsidize your attendance, and we are willing to support those who graduate with good projects and leadership prospects. We are willing to support your social leadership project with a subsidy or a bonus, so that you build up important political capital. And when the campaign comes along, we will offer you USD 5,000 to start up your electoral effort". If parties did all that, I would like to know how many women they would be able to recruit' (López-Hernández 2015; see also Barrios 2015, León 2015, López-Hernández 2015, Valencia 2015).

There is a general recognition that forcing parties to invest more and better resources in the training of emerging female leaders would be a key step towards easing women's access to power (Blal 2015, Carrillo 2015, Córdoba 2015, Cuartas 2015, Ramírez 2015, Serna 2015, Ungar 2015). Angela María Robledo, a two-time member of the Chamber of Representatives, expressed it in unequivocal terms: 'Political training processes are the single most important transformation that we can do if we want to ease women's access to power. ... I think that in those spaces you meet other women and share the notion that one's situation is not simply a personal condition, but a political and historical fact. I have seen that it is in those spaces where women grow willing to take risks and become able to articulate demands within political parties' (Robledo 2015).

Important though it is, however, political training is only part of the solution to the difficulties of aspiring female politicians. Crucially, no financial form of affirmative action exists during campaigns in Colombia, through the use of either public or private money. Making financial support available and granting preferential media access to female candidates during campaigns would appear to be highly advisable if they are to compete effectively (León 2015, López-Obregón 2015, Novoa 2015, Pantoja 2015, Ramírez 2015, Valencia 2015). Once more, Senator López-Hernández put it sharply: "If I had to choose one institutional transformation to facilitate women's access to power it would be to establish funding quotas for women within parties, as a share of the parties' campaign and ordinary funding. If I had to pick between two institutional designs, one with a 30 per cent gender representation quota and no money and another with no representation quota but 30 per cent of money channelled to women, I would take the latter. Money will deliver the representation quota, but the representation quota will not deliver the money' (López-Hernández 2015). Cecilia López-Montaño, a former Senator from the Liberal Party, went so far as to say that increasing training resources for parties would be a waste of money, compared to making funding available to women during campaigns, including resources collected and disbursed by gender-oriented civil society initiatives akin to Emily's List in the United States (López-Montaño 2015).²⁷

²⁷ Emily's List is a Political Action Committee that financially supports pro-choice female Democratic candidates in the United States. Founded in 1985, the group disbursed nearly USD 45 million during the 2014 election cycle to the candidates it chose to support. See <<https://www.emilyslist.org>>.

Whether by increasing the resources for political education or by explicitly supporting the campaign efforts of women, the expansion of political finance affirmative action measures requires a change of heart and culture within Colombian political parties. Given the country's social and electoral dynamics, if political groupings truly want to attract outstanding female leaders they will have to consciously remove the obstacles that currently block their development. In the words of Carlos Córdoba, the Democratic Centre's Coordinator of the Office of Minorities: 'Both as a society and as a party we have a challenge. There is something we have to put right: women don't believe in politics and that's why they don't want to participate in politics. They have to participate. And for that to happen we have to show that the game is competitive, broad, diverse, open to debate' (Córdoba 2015). These are lofty goals. Do Colombian parties offer fertile soil in which the seeds of gender parity can grow?

Structural obstacles

If affirmative action is sorely needed in Colombian politics, including on the financial front, it is because profound structural barriers to women's political participation persist, hurdles that political finance practices simply tend to reflect. The realities of political finance described above—particularly the role of money in preventing the emergence of independent female leaders—are, in a way, an epiphenomenon of more fundamental social and cultural factors that place women at a disadvantage even before they become politically active. These issues were underscored repeatedly and at length by nearly all the people interviewed in the course of this research. As Elisabeth Ungar noted, 'the issues here are much more structural. ... Women in Colombia face enormous obstacles to participating in equitable conditions in electoral processes. One of those obstacles is political finance. One among many' (Ungar 2015; see also López-Hernández 2015, Serna 2015, Ungar 2015).

As is to be expected, some of the cultural traits that relegate women to a subordinate role in public affairs are facts of life within Colombian political parties. As María Josefa Serna, a party official at the Patriotic Union, noted: 'In a patriarchal society it is very difficult to eradicate patriarchy within parties' (Serna 2015). Some would say that it is *particularly* difficult to eliminate from party life. Indeed, among female leaders there is a sense that party organizations are largely male-dominated spaces, which block, or at least fail to promote, women's political participation every step of the way (Cuartas 2015, López-Montaño 2015, Robledo 2015, Ungar 2015, Valencia 2015). In the words of Senator Claudia López-Hernández, 'in Colombia, political parties are organizations that are more *machista* than the average' (López-Hernández 2015).

They are not all equally so, however. The Independent Movement for Absolute Renewal (MIRA) was identified as a party that makes a consistent effort to achieve gender parity in all aspects of party life (León 2015). Unsurprisingly, it tops the gender equality ranking published in 2015 by UN Women, UNDP and NIMD. The ranking reflects the results yielded by an index of 22 variables, covering a range of aspects from the proportion of female candidates at all levels to the percentage of women in executive bodies and the promotion of women's participation by parties' internal by-laws.²⁸ However, even MIRA barely scores

²⁸ For a detailed explanation of the methodology behind the rankings see UN Women and UNDP (2015).

above 50 on a scale of 0 (low) to 100 (high) (see Table 4.1). As if to underscore the cross-cultural nature of gender discrimination, the two movements that aim to represent Colombia's indigenous populations occupy the bottom of the ranking.

Table 4.1. Gender equality ranking in political parties in Colombia, 2015

Party or political movement	Points	Position
Independent Movement for Absolute Renewal (MIRA)	56.18	1
Colombian Liberal Party	52.69	2
Independent Social Alliance (ASI)	47.58	3
Colombian Conservative Party	46.84	4
Green Alliance Party	44.05	5
Alternative Democratic Pole Party	43.66	6
Democratic Centre Party	43.30	7
Patriotic Union Party	40.56	8
Social Party of National Unity (Partido de la U)	39.24	9
Radical Change Party	31.91	10
Citizens' Option Party	31.54	11
Indigenous and Social Alternative Movement (MAIS)	29.64	12
Indigenous Authorities Movement of Colombia (AICO)	27.96	13

Source: Reproduced from UN Women and UNDP, *Ranking de Igualdad de Mujeres y Hombres en los Partidos y Movimientos Políticos: Metodología y Resultados* (2015: 13).

The ostensible difficulties that women face within political parties offer a vivid contrast to their prominent leadership roles in civil society and grassroots organizations all over Colombia, where women are, if anything, over-represented (León 2015, López-Hernández 2015). The problematic translation of women's social and community leadership into political power suggests that parties are indeed peculiarly hostile organizations to women, as most of the female political leaders interviewed for this paper claimed. The greater need for funding in political activities relative to grassroots activism provides one plausible explanation for the apparent reluctance of many female community leaders to take the plunge into party politics (Carrillo 2015). In addition, there is the distaste of many female social activists of the possibility of being co-opted—or even corrupted, according to their perception—by the political machine (Robledo 2015).

The prevalence of these perceptions of hostility, both among women that are active in politics and among those who look on from the outside, suggests that reforming the way party organizations function is of the essence if gender balance is to be achieved in the political sphere. This means that adopting mandatory gender representation quotas in all party bodies is as important as introducing them for party lists. Voluntary internal gender quotas are very much the exception among Colombian parties, although, as Chapter 4 shows, some progress has been made with regard to the representation of women at the parties' highest levels. Nonetheless, even the fulfilment of a representation quota might be merely a superficial remedy to gender imbalances. Marta Lucía

Ramírez made an interesting observation that highlights the deeper attitudinal adjustments that are required for change to happen within parties: 'On the Political Directorate of the Conservative Party there are several women, and we are very opinionated and active. The problem lies not in how many women and how many men there are, but in the fact that the Directorate has a very significant presence of legislators, and both male and female legislators end up moving the party in a certain direction. ... Male and female legislators are alike, think alike, walk alike, behave alike, and are driven by very similar motives' (Ramírez 2015).

For gender parity to happen, party leaders—either male or female—must decide to take gender issues seriously and acknowledge that representation and even financial quotas are not enough to overcome the obstacles that lay in women's paths to political power (Ungar 2015). Many other adjustments are needed for women to enter politics and participate effectively. These adjustments concern, first and foremost, social structures and deeply held cultural norms.

The prevalent political mores in Colombia are clearly inimical to the participation of women. Political negotiations are often done in places that are not easily accessible or even comfortable for women, such as private clubs' sauna rooms, reserved parlours or golf courses (León 2015). Moreover, they are carried out at hours that impinge on family life, and are nearly always lubricated by lots of alcohol. As Alejandra Barrios noted: 'Politics is done by night and drinking. That's our way of doing politics. Whether male or female, if you are in a small town and want to be local councillor you do politics drinking *aguardiente*. If you want to go to Congress you do it drinking whisky in the evening. Here we really have a cultural issue. And if you don't do that, you'll be left out of political negotiations' (Barrios 2015; see also Carrillo 2015, León 2015).

The normal working hours in Colombian politics mean that women face unpalatable dilemmas on a daily basis: 'The meetings of the party's directorates—widely dominated by men—are in the evening. Political parties don't have inclusive rules. The most eloquent example of this is Congress: plenary sessions there start at 4.00 pm and last until midnight. ... How does a woman do that if she has small children?' (Barrios 2015). Senator Paloma Valencia, from the Democratic Centre, confirms the point:

The sheer amount of time demanded by politics is a problem for women. ... You start at 6 o'clock in the morning and, if you are in Congress, you continue until midnight. That's during the week, and then at weekends you have to visit your region. Which partner would be willing to put up with that? ... This affects both men and women, but I have the sense that the sacrifice of inter-personal and family relationships demanded by politics falls harder on women. I ask myself: "If I had a child would I have to retire from politics?" That's a question a lot of women think of.' (Valencia 2015)

Underlying these dilemmas is a profound issue regarding the particular expectations that society places on women. In most societies, certainly in Colombia, women are expected to bear the lion's share of caregiving responsibilities. This expectation places enormous limitations on women taking on political roles that will inevitably take a toll on the time and effort devoted to providing care for family members. These limitations stem not merely from questions of time allocation, but also from the psychological and emotional

costs borne by women when they venture into the public sphere. Very often, a woman's active political participation comes attached to a sense of guilt for discharging on to others the 'natural' responsibilities that male-dominated societies have come to see as part of the women's lot—caring for their children, partner and household. Nothing equivalent exists for men. To María Josefa Serna:

the single most important obstacle to female political participation is the two work shifts that women do: their normal work shift outside of the home, and then the 8 or 10 hours a day they devote to homemaking. ... It is very difficult for a woman to abandon the care of her children in order to participate in politics. If you force her to choose, you kill her. If women choose not to become politically active, that's something we have to respect. But we should also demand that men endure the same two work shifts that are expected of women. Most men only do one shift (Serna 2015; see also Carrillo 2015, Iguarán 2015, López-Montaño 2015, López-Obregón 2015, Novoa 2015, Robledo 2015).

For former Senator Cecilia López-Montaño, the key transformation that would enable the active and equitable involvement of women in politics would be to shift the burden of caregiving activities in a way that increases the opportunities for women to become economically autonomous:

In order to acquire political power you must have economic autonomy; and in order to have economic autonomy you have to solve the problem posed by caregiving. If you don't lift from the women's shoulders the weight of caregiving activities and don't shift those to third parties that can provide them through a combination of the state and the market, you won't be able to liberate women and they won't have any options. ... That's where the key to political access lies. Once women acquire economic autonomy, getting them involved in the exercise of political power will be much easier. ... The road to power [for women] runs through the care economy, through the effort to lift that burden from women, to make caregiving part of the political agenda, to stop believing that women were born to provide care for others, and to allow women to make the same decisions that men can make (López-Montaño 2015).

Thus, shifting and rebalancing caregiving tasks is part of the deep social transformation required to mitigate the economic subordination of women.²⁹ Such subordination is, alongside women's multiple roles, the key obstacle to their equitable participation in a money-driven political system. In a context in which candidates are largely expected to fund their own electoral efforts, if women do not have economic assets of their own or do not belong to a well-off political clan, they are doomed from the outset. The plight of many women of modest means was neatly described by Rosa Iguarán, the General Secretary of the Indigenous and Social Alternative Movement (MAIS), an indigenous-based

²⁹ In a 2011 survey, 1 in 10 Colombians agreed that 'an adequate education for girls is one that develops their roles as mothers and wives' (Ørstavik and Lizcano 2013).

party that represents an impoverished group: ‘Men, because they work, because they own businesses, because they have seed capital, can ask other people to lend them money. In the case of women, this is more complicated. We just don’t have the financial autonomy to say “I have this capital, I have this business, and Mr So-and-so I would like to borrow some money from you for my campaign and I’ll pay you back”’ (Iguarán 2015; see also López-Montaño 2015, López-Obregón 2015, Pantoja 2015). It is not simply that women have fewer material assets; they are also, as a rule, much more reluctant than men to put family-owned assets on the line in the quest for political power (Barrios 2015).

Hence, when Carlos Córdoba, a party official at Democratic Centre, says that ‘the main hurdle for women to have access to decision-making circles is their own willingness to participate’ (Córdoba 2015), he is stating an incomplete truth. Yes, most women in Colombia are disinclined to step forward and engage in political activism, but it is also true that Colombian society—like most others—puts all types of impediment in their way. This bestows on a woman’s decision to enter politics a degree of complexity and gravity rarely seen in the case of a man. These impediments certainly include hurdles connected to political finance rules and practices. However, they also encompass far more substantive problems derived from the endurance of patriarchal mores within political parties and society at large. The evidence gathered in the course of this research suggests that compared to the challenges posed to women by their extensive caregiving responsibilities and their frequent lack of economic autonomy, the obstacles created by political finance to the participation of women in the public sphere, while real, are comparatively minor.

Conclusion and recommendations

This report suggests that the shortcomings of Colombia's political finance system go well beyond the way it treats women. They also suggest that political finance is far from the only, or even the most important, hindrance that stands in the way of women fully exercising their political rights. While Colombia has taken significant steps towards a more gender-balanced political system—most notably the recent adoption of female representation quotas—it has become clear that more can and should be done to stimulate the political participation of women.

This is particularly true with regard to aspiring female leaders, unconnected to the family-based political machines that control vast swaths of Colombia as well as many of its political parties. Currently, those prospective leaders, who are often endowed with impressive records and social commitment, face almost insurmountable barriers, notably financial barriers, to entering politics with any chance of success. Colombian society and politics are the poorer for it; and the country's leadership pool is smaller and shallower than it would otherwise be. This ought to be corrected. Indeed, if the present state of affairs offers any hint of what new gender-parity oriented reforms could bring about, more women in politics would be a boon for Colombia. As the authors of this paper can attest, one asset that the country's political system already boasts is a cadre of impressive female leaders in nearly every political party and in the highest echelons of politics. Many remarkable Colombian women have been able to break through the proverbial glass ceiling, but they have done so against the odds or aided by support networks that are unavailable to most women.

Improving these odds will take more than political finance reform, but it will require an element of this. Hence, based on the findings of this research, a number of policy recommendations are set out below, grouped in four categories: political finance regulations, the electoral system, the internal life of political parties and the actions of civil society.

On political finance regulations

Improve enforcement of transparency rules and sanctions

Despite the breadth of political finance rules in Colombia, little is known about the way in which political parties and candidates fund their efforts and spend their resources. The Colombian political finance system has a severe transparency deficit that makes it prone to corruption and undermines the effectiveness of all the financial regulations that have been put in place, most notably at the local level.³⁰ This is serious in a country where illicit groups have long been part of the political and electoral landscape. Moreover, it is almost impossible to establish the relevance of measures to level the playing field during campaigns—including public funding and forms of financial affirmative action to help women—in the absence of reliable information about political finance practices.

A political system where money reigns supreme is one that tends to harm women candidates the most, particularly those not linked to established political clans. While the mandatory adoption of the digital platform *Cuentas Claras* is a step in the right direction, it is clear that the real challenge concerns the political autonomy and effectiveness of the NEC, and the virtual impunity that now prevails with regard to political finance violations. This must be addressed for all sorts of reasons, including the need to create more equitable conditions for female candidates, particularly emerging candidates.

Increase permanent public funding for the promotion of female leadership and control over the use of those resources

Colombia's political parties currently receive money from the public purse to promote the political participation of women. However, these resources are probably insufficient to make any real difference to bringing about gender parity. More importantly, the vagueness of the legal clauses that govern the use of these resources makes it all but impossible to know whether they are being deployed to train and educate prospective female leaders, which according to most of our interviewees is an urgent need. Political finance laws should be more explicit on the legitimate uses to which those earmarked resources can be put and attach credible sanctions to their misuse.

Earmark public funding for female candidates during campaigns

More funding for training and education is a desirable tool to promote women's participation in the medium to long term. In order to increase women's representation in the short run, however, it would be highly advisable to earmark part of the public funding available during campaigns for the support of female candidates. This would be a natural outgrowth of the adoption of gender representation quotas.

³⁰ On the particular urgency of addressing the political finance enforcement deficit at the local level see Casas-Zamora (2016) and Perdomo and Uribe-Burcher (2016).

Simplify access to public funding during campaigns

One of the flaws of Colombia's public funding system is the cumbersome rules that surround pre-election subsidies. As noted in Chapter 2, only a small proportion of candidates claim pre-election funding, mostly due to the complexities of the financial guarantees demanded by the authorities, as well as the funds' belated disbursement. The prevailing rules harm all candidates but offer more of a challenge to women. As it stands, the insurance policy required to back the subsidies is entirely dependent on the perception of a candidate's electoral viability, a criterion that can be problematic for many female candidates. While it is sound to demand guarantees from claimants, the options to back the subsidies and the procedure to claim them must be made more flexible if pre-election subsidies are to give under-funded candidates timely access to critical campaign resources. They are currently fulfilling this purpose in a very limited way. Reforming the process to provide access pre-election funding would be a necessary complement to the reforms suggested above.

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On the electoral system

Consider the adoption of mandatory closed lists

Colombian political parties can decide whether to use closed lists, a system of preferential voting or a combination of both. Preferential voting is currently by far the most prevalent option in Colombia. Discussing the relative merits of closed lists versus preferential voting is beyond the scope of this report. However, it must be said that closed party lists offer undeniable advantages from the standpoint of female representation. They simplify the fulfilment of the extant representation quotas, and, as seen above, ease the financial burden that preferential voting systems inevitably inflict on individual candidates. Both aspects are very important for enhancing women's access to political power in Colombia. The impact of closed lists on gender parity would be magnified by the adoption of gender alternation, a reform advocated by many of our interviewees and adopted by several Latin American countries in recent years.³¹

On political parties

Introduce female quotas for party structures

This report makes it clear that the internal life of the political parties is the key battleground for achieving gender parity. The role of parties in promoting or blocking the emergence of female leadership cannot be overestimated. The adoption of female representation quotas—or gender parity rules—by party bodies at all levels is not merely advisable but indispensable. This would visibly change the prevailing male-dominated dynamic within political organizations and make more likely the adoption of more women-friendly financial rules and political routines. In the light of the adoption of a 30 per cent gender representation quota in party lists, it seems natural to introduce a 30 per cent rule for all party bodies in the short term. Moreover, the disbursement of public

³¹ As of 2014, Bolivia, Costa Rica and Ecuador had adopted a system of gender alternation and parity at national elections, while others, including Argentina and Venezuela, had done it at the sub-national level. See Archenti (2014).

funding should be made conditional on the implementation of gender quotas within parties.

Establish clear allocation rules for party funds

One of the recurring complaints by the female politicians interviewed for this research was the almost total opacity with regard to the allocation of party funds to candidates during campaigns. If we are advocating earmarking a share of public funding to support female candidates, there is no reason not to establish a parallel rule covering the resources raised and disbursed by central party organizations. Introducing, for instance, a rule that 30 per cent of all party funds must be channelled to support female candidates would obviously enhance the electoral chances of women while curbing largely unaccountable power within political parties. Indeed, the capricious nature of the current allocation systems bestows enormous power on party authorities to promote or punish any candidate. While campaign dynamics demand that a measure of flexibility is preserved with regard to the internal allocation of funding during the campaign, it is important to bring clarity to the exercise of such a prerogative. If this can be done in a way that also promotes the electoral success of women, even better.

Promote women's leadership and mentoring programmes within parties

Intra-party political training and education schemes for women are sorely needed in Colombian political parties and should be decisively promoted. The content and orientation of these can and should vary widely. However, given the significant obstacles faced by emergent female leaders in Colombia, which prevent many women from participating in politics, it is particularly important to promote the existence of spaces within parties where established female politicians—and also male politicians who need to be sensitized to these challenges—can interact with aspiring female leaders and mentor them. This, by itself, will not change the steep odds face by those emerging leaders, but could provide them with valuable inspiration, information and contacts to ease their path into politics.

Adopt family-friendly schedules for political activities

Transforming deeply ingrained conventions about the way politics is done is very difficult. It is understandable that many political activities should take place in the evening, when normal work shifts end, but there has to be a recognition that this imposes sacrifices that disproportionately affect women and visibly impede their political activism. Efforts can and should be made to hold party meetings and sessions of representative bodies at times that are compatible with a normal family life. This relatively minor change would almost certainly have a huge impact on the political participation of women in Colombia and elsewhere.

On civil society

Promote the creation of female-oriented fundraising networks

If female candidates are to be more effective in running for office, and gender issues are to increase their limited airtime during campaigns, Colombian women's organizations should consider adopting collective action practices that have proved very powerful in other countries. Establishing networks that pool resources to support female candidates who vow to fight for women's rights is not unthinkable in a country such as Colombia, which is endowed with a highly organized civil society, a profusion of women's organizations—many of which are dedicated to mitigating the consequences of the country's armed conflict—and a population with ever greater access to digital technologies. The creation of such a fundraising network would also convey the message that establishing more equitable conditions for women candidates should be the result not simply of decisions made at the top of the political system, but also of actions taken at grassroots level.

These are only a few suggestions, mostly gleaned from the stories and reflections shared by our interviewees. Regardless of whether they are adopted, it is crucial to understand that even after the introduction of gender representation quotas, the Colombian political system still has a long way to go to achieve gender parity. In addition, while it is true that lasting change demands the removal of deep-rooted cultural obstacles, institutional reforms—including political finance reforms—geared towards creating a more level playing field for women candidates are nonetheless a worthy pursuit.

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Annex

List of interviews

1. Alejandra Barrios, Executive Director, Electoral Observation Mission (MOE), 2 December 2015
 2. Nadia Blel, Senator 2014–2018, Conservative Party, 1 December 2015
 3. Idayris Yolima Carrillo, Magistrate, National Election Council, 3 December 2015
 4. Carlos Córdoba, Coordinator, Office of Minorities, Democratic Centre Party, 30 January 2015
 5. Gloria Cuartas, former Mayor of Apartadó, former candidate for the Senate (2002, 2006, 2010), Liberal Party (currently member of the collective “Otra Colombia es Posible” [Another Colombia is Possible]), 4 December 2015
 6. Javier Hoyos, lobbyist, Javier Hoyos Advisers, Legislative and Government Procedures, 3 December 2015
 7. Rosa Iguarán, Secretary General, Alternative Social and Indigenous Movement, 2 December 2015
 8. Juanita León, journalist, Executive Director of La Silla Vacía, 4 December 2015
 9. Claudia López-Hernández, Senator 2014–2018, Green Alliance, 1 December 2015
 10. Cecilia López-Montaño, former Senator (2006–2010), Liberal Party, 1 December 2015
 11. Clara López-Obregón, former presidential candidate (2014), former candidate for the mayor’s office in Bogotá (2015), currently Minister of Labour, Alternative Democratic Pole, 3 December 2015
 12. Armando Novoa, Magistrate, National Election Council, 3 December 2015
 13. Ángela Pantoja, National Administrative Director, Conservative Party, 1 December 2015
 14. Marta Lucía Ramírez, former presidential candidate (2014), former Senator (2006–2009), former Minister of Defense (2002–2003), former Minister of Foreign Trade (1998–2002), Conservative Party, 2 December 2015
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15. Ángela María Robledo, Member of the House of Representatives 2014–2018, Green Alliance, 2 December 2015
16. Clara Rojas, Member of the House of Representatives (2014–2018), Liberal Party, 2 December 2015
17. María Josefa Serna, National Administrative Director, Patriotic Union, 1 December 2015
18. Elisabeth Ungar, Executive Director, Transparencia por Colombia [Transparency for Colombia], 30 November 2015
19. Paloma Valencia, Senator 2014–2018, Democratic Centre Party, 3 December 2015

Note: All interviews took place in Bogotá.

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The impact of economic resources on the political participation of women has become a prominent issue in the field of comparative political finance. In recent years, there has been a growing recognition that politics dominated by money is, more often than not, politics dominated by men. It is not surprising that the issue has moved to the forefront of debates on gender and political finance.

This report assesses the extent to which political finance is a significant obstacle to women running for political office. It focuses on the experience of Colombia, a country that, like many other Latin American countries, continues to struggle with the legacies of pervasive social, economic and political inequality that disproportionately affect women.

It explores the role of political finance in hindering women's access to political power and its relative weight with respect to other obstacles to women's political participation. It also suggests a number of institutional changes that might ameliorate some of the problems identified, while being fully cognizant of the limits to institutional change recasting deep-rooted gender imbalances.

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