

IV. Lessons learned and successful strategies and tools offered as advice from experienced female candidates

The present section presents useful experiences and success stories of women who managed to overcome some of the barriers mentioned in the analysis. It starts by presenting several important lessons learned, and then proceeds with presenting some useful strategies and tools that helped them during their election. To illustrate this, the present section refers also to the case studies of the two parliamentarians used in this assessment as evidence (annex II).

A. Lessons learned

1. On the mindset of political candidates

- a. Be careful about dealing with politicians as they are the first target of defamation and bullying and hence one has to use great wisdom and deliberation;
- b. Forget about the materialistic gains and do not make it one of the goals but instead focus on serving the community, as it will have a big impact on society and be of benefit to all (Case study, Nenawa Parliamentarian).

2. On the preparation for the endeavour

- a. Develop a correct, detailed and well-planned action plan for the nomination phase (Nenawa parliamentarian);
- b. Nobody should venture into the election game without having the needed capabilities and patience and one must also have a clear programme that is well

defined and can be implemented, and be confident that his or her party agrees to this programme;

- c. A study needs to be undertaken to assess the priorities of voters. We live in a changing world, what is needed now is not the same as yesterday, every candidate must be aware of this issue (Case-study, Baghdad parliamentarian).

3. Guidance for implementation

- a. Raise awareness and promote the importance of women's actual role (Baghdad parliamentarian);
- b. Always have perseverance (PC member who won outside the quota).

B. Strategies and tools as support factors that helped political candidates in their election

The women's caucus bringing together Iraqi women parliamentarians was supportive for two parliamentarians from Nenawa and Baghdad;

Degrees or other academic achievements were also a supportive factor for several parliamentarians from Baghdad.

Testimonies from MPs and PC members describe the attributes that led to their success

Likewise the social practical experience supported several parliamentarians from

Baghdad; for Alia Fateh, through serving the Iraqi people both inside and outside Iraq, and Hanan Noury through her volunteer work since 2006 when she joined a large grass-root community and is still continuing to communicate with them.

Being independent candidates and having previous political exposure (for example by serving in the PC) helped parliamentarians from Baghdad and Nenawa in several ways.

A combination of several of those support factors were the key to success for the parliamentarian in Baghdad (Alia El Amara) namely: being an independent candidate, previous political service, academic degrees, and practical social experience and service in and out of Iraq.

Family, relatives and friends were the main supporters, after the candidate had proven her worth through her work on the PC (Nenawa).

Attending regular meetings in which political analysis was provided as well as training courses provided by civil society organizations, helped a parliamentarian from Najaf.

The personal meetings conducted between the candidate and her nominator, were a great psychological support (parliamentarian from Najaf).

Adopting honesty as value in their messages is also a key to success. As maintained by focus groups, this is a favourable asset for female candidates.

First of all, I must clarify who suggested nomination to me: one of the employees who was with me at the university suggested that I nominate myself and he was a resident of Sadr City, where the majority are members of the Sadr movement. The employee informed me that Mr. Muqtada al-Sadr prefers independent academic figures and holders of higher degrees, and indeed I was nominated and won. I was the only one that Mr. Muqtada allowed to run, unlike all those who participated in the previous elections, because of my integrity, and my good knowledge of my work and my role within parliament, and I have no accusations of corruption, and not only that, but I headed the list in Baghdad. I was able to get 55,251 votes without anyone's help. At the beginning of my candidacy, the voters were from the university community, and after being known for my courage and professionalism, I was able to win the confidence of the Iraqi street to get a number of votes comparable to large numbers of men, especially as I am a candidate from Baghdad, and the voters are in Baghdad.

Source: Majda Abdul Latif Mohammed Ali Tamimi.

I had already invested a lot of effort in helping people with stable jobs, and they were one of the assets that left a great impact and helped in creating opportunities for success in Mosul society. I worked intensely to ensure that people who worked as contractors obtained permanent jobs in Nenawa. I worked hard to serve people, the needy and the sick, and to this moment I adopt many families in order to help them financially. People respect me because I never gave false promises and I did not tell anyone that I would help them if I couldn't. I was always transparent. Because of my history and my political work and the support for the job-placement contracts in 2008, people had great confidence and backed me because I had left a mark through my humanitarian and political work.

Source: Mahasin Hamdoun, an MP from Nenawa.

I had already been nominated in two election cycles; the first and second for the PC, so the third nomination for parliament was not a difficult decision. Through my team and my wide networks, I knew all the rules of the election. I put in every polling station someone who watched the number of votes so that my votes don't get stolen, and I've been studying the needs of every district and area. I worked to respond to needs whether it was through a service or through a service institution. In terms of funding, I was financially self-sufficient. My two previous sessions as a member of the Nenawa PC, and also from the first session of parliament, meant I could raise a large sum for the nomination again. (Mahasin Hamdoun).

In relation to the election campaign I had previous experience because this was not the first time for me.

Source: Majda Ali Tamimi.

My message is honesty and transparency when working with others. I work in partnership with people to fix defects in state institutions and legislate laws in ways to benefit the public.

Source: Mahasin Hamdoun.

My message to the voters is that I am one of them and I am honest with them; I do not promise them anything that I cannot deliver or that is not part of my work as a deputy. In the last term as MP I had completed a number of housing project in the neighbourhood of El Rahma, and then through legislation I helped poor people own homes. It is through that act that I managed to win large numbers of votes.

Source: Majda Ali Tamimi.