

OUR WORK IN BURUNDI

STRIVING FOR A MORE INCLUSIVE FUTURE THE STORY OF A POLITICIAN AND TRAINER

Marie Chantal Ndayishimiye is an active member of Burundi's FRODEBU party, and the Vice Chair of the Organization of Social Democratic Women. She first became a party member in 1991, when she was studying at university. In 1993, she was shaken by the assassination of Burundi's president, Melchior Ndadaye. When President Cyprien Ntaryamira was also assassinated the following year, Chantal's commitment to politics grew. She felt a need to try to make a change... to contribute to a better, more peaceful future for her country.





Opening horizons through training

For Chantal, the path to success in politics boils down to three things: willpower, commitment and support. She believes that, with these three ingredients, it is possible to have a career in politics, perhaps even contributing to the kind of future she would like to see.

During her time as a politician, Chantal has received support from NIMD, taking part in many trainings organized by our partner, the Burundi Leadership Training Program (BLTP). Among these, she particularly recognizes the Training of Trainers in Interparty Dialogue workshop. During this session, Chantal learned how to train others in her party on listening to opposing views and reaching consensus through respectful dialogue.

“Through these training workshops, organized by BLTP and NIMD, my knowledge has been much improved. We learned how to work with members of other political parties, communicate with them, and avoid and manage conflict.”

Chantal also highlights her training on strategic planning for political parties. Through this multiparty workshop, NIMD and BLTP aimed to help the participants look ahead and anticipate developments that could affect their parties. Through the training, Chantal learned how planning can make it easier to deal with political events, societal demands and democratic changes.

Taking action towards inclusive politics

With her new skills and motivation, Chantal began facilitating internal workshops for women, where she trained women from her party to run for positions of influence in Burundi’s 2020 elections.

“I am so happy to see the steps women have taken in my party.

Before the trainings, women politicians were afraid to be part of decision-making bodies.”

A lack of roles in these spaces has been one of the many challenges that women politicians in Burundi face. Before Chantal’s training, only one in seven spaces in her party’s decision-making bodies was taken up by women.

Chantal and her peers decided that this had to change. With support from BLTP and NIMD, they started to make an inventory of the trainings that they had received from Chantal as the party’s internal trainer. They then set up a committee of eight women to lobby the national party office to include women in all party organs at the national, provincial and even municipal levels

As a result of their efforts, the party leader signed a resolution which makes sure women make up at least 30% of the party’s decision-making bodies.

What’s more, the resolution has been successfully implemented. As Chantal proudly states, 17 out of 18 of Burundi’s Federal Offices have three or more women among their members members. The 18th has two women.

Looking to the future

The eight-woman committee continues to promote the political participation of women. Chantal and her peers organize meetings across Burundi’s provinces and communes to sensitize women to the new resolution so that they can be elected and support the nomination of women for the 2020 elections.

NIMD will continue to provide support to these efforts. We are proud work alongside people like Chantal to ensure a more inclusive future in Burundian politics.

OUR WORK IN UKRAINE

EMPOWERING LEADERS FROM INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT TO REFUGEE ADVOCATE



Natalia Maryichuk is a former student of the Democracy School in Lviv, Ukraine, which is managed by the Eastern European Centre for Multiparty Democracy (EECMD) with the support of NIMD. However, Natalia's path to the Democracy School is not like that of an average student. Originally from Alchevsk, East Ukraine, her life was firmly connected with her native Donbas. There she completed her education and built a successful career – first in a large engineering venture and then as an entrepreneur and consultant.

The conflict in Donbas changed all of that. Natalia became an internally displaced person, forced to relocate, together with her family, to the western part of Ukraine after the 2014 annexation of Crimea and Russian-Ukrainian conflict. Her personal experience of being an internally displaced person, and the challenges she has faced, convinced her to turn to grassroots civic activism.



Facing a new reality

For Natalia, becoming an internally displaced person meant saying goodbye to family friends, closing her thriving business, and severing ties with the place she called home her entire life.

“When I settled in Lviv in 2014, more than 1300km away from my home town, I had to start my life anew. First, I needed to look for new opportunities; and for that I needed to learn new skills” says Natalia. Her experience following the forced relocation shows how life’s great challenges can bring opportunities and achievements. After moving to Lviv, Natalia invested a lot of time and energy in her self-development to prepare for new opportunities. On her own initiative, she started a new family business in the field of agricultural hydroponics. However, an even greater change has occurred in her attitude towards engagement in political life.

Taking a stand for a new community

In 2015 Natalia became determined to help her fellow internally displaced Ukrainians. This led her to establish the Civic Movement of Donbas Refugees (CMDR), an NGO which she has chaired since 2016.

“The challenges that internally displaced persons like me face in an everyday life have brought together a group of like-minded people with a similar experience, who have ended up in the city of Lviv and the wider region” notes Natalia. “The idea was to join forces to help ourselves and

other internally displaced persons in everyday matters, but most importantly make our voice heard in the local and regional communities.”

Taking on this responsibility turned out to be a demanding task, which also required new knowledge and specific skills. Natalia admits she had very little experience of involvement in civic and political activities at the time. So she started looking for an opportunity to acquire knowledge and tools which could help her lead and develop CMDR. “That is how I found the Democracy School in Lviv in the second half of 2017. And I was very lucky to have had such an opportunity!” she adds.

Through the Democracy School, Natalia took courses in both theoretical and practical political subjects, including human rights, fundraising, and advocacy methods. Natalia is convinced that her participation in the NIMD/EECMD Democracy School has changed how she looks at politics.

“The School has opened my eyes to many political problems and their possible solutions, like corruption and intolerance.” She emphasizes that while the more theory-based courses and discussions have enriched her understanding of the political system functioning on different levels, the more practical courses and trainings have empowered her with new important tools in her work as an NGO leader. The trainings during the regular classes and extracurricular events were perfectly equipped to meet the needs of an evolving civic activist and potential political leader.

Putting lessons into practice

“The opportunity to learn about channels of peaceful political influence and fundraising has shaped the principles and methods we apply for running our organization, and has improved our sense of strategic direction” she explains. She also found inspiration in the course on human rights, after which she placed the protection of rights of internally displaced persons a key pillar of the organization. Through advocacy networks built at the school, Natalia also joined the Lviv Reforms Council Coalition – a civic initiative for the coordination of democratic reforms in the Lviv region.

Since the end of her course in 2018, Natalia has stayed close to the School community, and continues to take part in its activities. Through this she continues to advocate for democratization, collaborating with both alumni and current students in their own projects.

Thanks to the Democracy School project, Natalia says she has also developed a deep sense of civic awareness and responsibility. She has strengthened her commitment to supporting internally displaced persons like herself, and making the public and political culture in Ukraine more democratic. By acting as a leader of change in her organization and local community, Natalia is participating in the wider democratic transformation of Ukraine.