

Enhancing Understanding of Young Women's Political Aspirations and Participation

Final Report

Written for the National Democratic Institute

By the George Washington University Capstone Team

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Recent studies indicate that in order to achieve gender equality in political participation, development programming must consider how gender inequality in politics takes form, even before a woman makes the choice to enter the field. Filling this gap has been challenging, given that existing research and programming on youth and politics tends to focus primarily on the experience of young men under the age of 40. Empowering women to participate substantively in politics not only serves to bridge the existing gender disparity in politics, but is also critical to achieving gender equality more broadly.

In collaboration with the National Democratic Institute (NDI)'s Gender, Women, and Democracy team, the George Washington University (GWU) Capstone team explored the barriers placed on young women to identify ways in which future programming can support their political engagement. This study seeks to answer the following:

1. What are the individual, institutional, and socio-cultural barriers for women?
2. What are individual, institutional, and socio-cultural barriers for young women, specifically?
3. How do different political systems affect women's political participation?
4. What is the role of civic education in young women's political participation?

The desk-based literature review revealed young women as less likely to seek positions of leadership in politics, even with the skills and education identified as necessary to be a leader. The literature review also illustrated a connection between the visibility of females as role models in government, and young girls who can identify with their political leaders, in both rural and urban settings. Another major conclusion of this literature review was the important role civic education can play as a channel through which young people can understand citizenship. Previous research has found that civic education existed in various political systems but engaged students differently based on the cultural, social, and local context.

Based on the findings of the desk-based literature review, the GWU Capstone team conducted a series of focus groups and in-depth interviews in Bangkok and the rural town of Samut Sakhon. Students between the ages of 16 and 22 were selected for the study, in addition to former Members of Parliament (MP), to better understand the realities young Thai women and men face, and the government's perception of young Thai people.

The analysis is divided into three themes: *gender norms, young people, and political systems*. Gender norms regarding reproductive roles, time poverty, and representative and substantive equality were identified as barriers to young women's political participation. Low visibility of female leaders, lack of skills and confidence among young women, and violence against women also emerged as sub-themes. Age was found to be a significant barrier to engagement. Despite many participants being involved in Youth Councils or similar activities, the majority expressed age as a key restriction to their opinions being taken seriously by the government, and adults more broadly. Finally, given the current political system in Thailand, participants stated that discussing politics can be unsafe, and so had to be done secretly.

Civic education curricula in schools can provide students with the opportunity to discuss controversial issues, and even gain hands-on leadership experience, such as through student councils. In Thailand, where the political system is currently led by the military, the research questions aimed to identify what, if any, civic education exists, and whether this could be a potential avenue for future NDI programming.

The GWU Capstone team presents the following recommendations as general considerations to guide future NDI programming. As these recommendations may vary based on a country's political system, such as non-democracies, fragile democracies, and democracies, the recommendations account for the potential differences that arise from varying levels of democracy across states.

The following recommendations are divided into three main themes: civic education, programming for engaging young people, and programming for female politicians:

- Encourage Participation and Promote Gender Equality through Civic Education
- Increase Opportunities for Young Women to Obtain Skills and Gain Confidence
- Support Female Politicians to Increase Visibility and Reduce Gender Gap

These suggestions for future programming follow an intersectional approach, recognizing the importance to examine the role of gender, age, and rural and urban differences throughout design and implementation. The recommendations outline how to start overcoming gender disparity and how best to enhance young women's political aspirations and participation.

INTRODUCTION

Existing research and programming on youth and politics largely focuses on the experiences of young men under the age of 40, leaving a significant gap in understanding young women's political aspirations and participation. Recent studies indicate that, to achieve gender equality in political participation, development programs should consider how gender inequality in politics takes form even before a woman decides to step into the political field. Enabling young women to substantively participate in politics not only helps bridge this gender disparity in politics, but is also essential to achieving gender equality more broadly. The purpose of this study is to explore the barriers placed on young women, and to identify ways in which future programming can support their political engagement.

Research Objectives

NDI's Gender, Women and Democracy team developed a Theory of Change that illustrates the areas of action that must be addressed to achieve and sustain women's political participation. The Theory of Change states that, to "create an enabling environment for women's equal and active participation in politics, program and policy interventions need to remove barriers at the *individual, institutional, and socio-cultural levels*."

Therefore, this research seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are individual, institutional, and socio-cultural barriers for women?

Are women and men equally equipped with the skills needed to run for political office? What role or space do women occupy when elected and is this different than men? Are women and men equal under the law? How are women in politics portrayed, both today and throughout history, and how does this impact young women's political participation? How does women's political participation differ regarding ethnicity, religion, education level, region, and socioeconomic status?

2. What are individual, institutional, and socio-cultural barriers for young women, specifically?

Do young women have a harder time engaging in politics than young men? Do young women have the confidence to run for political office? What are some of the systems in place that prevent young women and men from participating in politics? Are young women and men's opinions valued equally? How does the hierarchical structure of society affect young women's political participation?

3. How do different political systems affect young women's political participation?

What is the role of the political system in each context in encouraging or discouraging young women's political participation? Do current political leaders see a need for young women's engagement in politics? To what extent does a country's political system influence civic education curriculum?

4. What is the role of civic education in young women's political participation?

Where, and at what age, do young women and men learn about politics? How does curriculum shape young people's perception of politics? Are the experiences and achievements of female political leaders taught in classrooms? Do schools encourage political participation? Is there a difference in how civic education is taught to young women versus young men?

The questions above informed field research to uncover the political experiences of young women. Focus groups and in-depth interviews with students and former politicians were conducted in Bangkok, Thailand's capital, and Samut Sakhon, a less populated and agriculturally-focused region west of the capital. The following report highlights findings from the study and is divided into the following four sections:

Section I provides a summary of the Thai political system to preface the local context and the example this research analysis will be based upon. This section will also provide a short review of the existing literature available on youth and political participation, gender and political participation, and the role of civic education.

Section II discusses how the research design was conceived and highlights the challenges and limitations faced during data gathering.

Section III contains the results of the field research, further divided and analyzed by codes representative of recurring themes.

Section IV will inform NDI's future global programming through thematic recommendations that consider a variety of political systems.

The **Appendix** contains the research design, questions for program implementation, and the literature review.

I. DESK RESEARCH

A. Thailand's Political System

In May 2014, mass nationwide protests led to a military coup d'état in Thailand. This coup, the nineteenth of its kind in the nation's history, resulted in the establishment of a military junta called the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) led by the Royal Thai Armed Forces. Under General Prayuth Chan-ocha, the NCPO issued a new constitution granting itself sweeping powers.¹ While Chan-o-cha promised reconciliation and peace for the Thai people, he has instead presided over an underperforming economy, an upsurge in violence among the disadvantaged Muslim minority in the south, and a repressive military and media climate.²

Young Thai women and men face many constraints due to socio-cultural expectations and traditions - and these challenges have only been exacerbated by the changing political climate. Academic freedom has also been constrained under the NCPO. University discussions and seminars on topics regarded as sensitive are subject to monitoring or cancellation by government authorities. Educators have been subjected to oppressive tactics to include surveillance, summonses for questioning, and even home visits by security officials.³

Young people are often only given token consideration in Thailand's political establishment, relegated to the sidelines from mainstream politics. Additionally, because of the conservative and hierarchical nature of Thai society, where experience and authority are valued above all else, there are few genuine mechanisms for young people to contribute to the political process.

In terms of gender, women legally hold the same rights as men in Thailand but experience higher rates of economic discrimination, domestic abuse, rape, and sex trafficking. These challenges are exacerbated by traditional gender role expectations of women and play a role in hindering young women from seeking opportunities to run for office.

B. Summary of Literature Review

The GWU Capstone team conducted a desk-based literature review on the barriers and opportunities for young women's political empowerment. Much of the research focused on economic empowerment, without significant consideration for civic engagement and political

¹ BBC News. 2014. "Thailand military seizes power in coup." <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-27517591>

² The Guardian. 2016. "The military is in control - but for how long?" <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/aug/12/the-guardian-view-on-thailand-the-military-is-in-control-but-for-how-long>

³ Freedom House. 2016. "Freedom in the World Report" <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2016/thailand>

participation as a means of empowerment. The literature focused on young people's political participation was mostly gender blind, and was therefore male biased. The experiences of young women and adolescent girls was also absent in existing and relevant studies and data on empowerment.

The research analysis revealed young women to be less likely to seek political leadership, even when having the skills and education they identified as necessary to be a leader. The literature review presented a connection between visibility of female role models in government, and young girls who can identify with their political leaders, in both rural and urban areas. Although the literature itself did not adequately answer the question of why young women were less likely to seek political leadership, the GWU Capstone team endeavored to identify the answer through field research.

Civic education has been criticized by some feminist scholars as reinforcing gender norms that inadvertently have a negative impact on young girls. Thus, one of the major conclusions of this literature review was the important role civic education can play as a means for young people to understand citizenship. Previous research found that civic education existed in various political systems but engaged students differently based on the cultural, social, and local context.

The research design, to be discussed in the subsequent sections, was therefore built around the idea of engaging young students, with a focus on how to address formal education. Curriculum, textbooks, and overall teaching neglects unequal gender power, and represents a male-dominated experience of civic duty and citizenship.

With the foundation presented by the literature review, the research team sought to develop a research methodology for the particularly unique context of Thailand, to better understand the barriers young people, and young women face to engage in politics, and inform NDI's future programming.

II. RESEARCH DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

A. Brief Overview of Research Conducted

The GWU Capstone team conducted a series of focus groups and in-depth interviews in metropolitan Bangkok, and in the rural town of Samut Sakhon. Students between the ages of 16 and 22 were selected to provide a better understanding of the realities young Thai women and men face on the ground. The team interviewed four former Members of Parliament (MP) as a means of understanding the government's perception of Thai young people. While the field research is not intended to be statistically significant, the data collected will serve to inform NDI's future programming in the region.

B. Participant Demographics and Selection

The NDI country office and the GWU Capstone Team collaborated to identify participants for this study. Participants comprised three groups: students from Bangkok, students from Samut Sakhon, and former Thai Members of Parliament (MP).

The selection of both male and female participants was intended to provide information on both the rural and urban experience, as well as the perspective of individuals who had pursued a career in politics. The main selection criteria included:

For Young Male and Female Students (both in Bangkok and Samut Sakhon)

- 16-22 years old
- Currently enrolled in a high school, university (Thammasat University and Chulalongkorn University), or technical school

For Male and Female Former MPs

- Previously held a democratically elected position in of two major political parties in Thailand
- Considered “young” at the time of election

The GWU Capstone team was provided contact information for a professor at Thammasat University, who in turn identified student volunteers for the study. NDI's country office

contacted a professor at Chulalongkorn University, who asked for student volunteers for the study. NDI's country office connected the GWU Capstone team to former members of parliament and members of a local youth council. Finally, in Samut Sakhon, NDI's country office connected the GWU Capstone team to a former local politician who asked for volunteers from the youth network he facilitates.

C. Qualitative Research Design and Development

Single-sex and mixed-sex focus groups, and in-depth one on one interviews were chosen to ensure data of the greatest quality and most use to the study could be collected. Single-sex focus groups allowed young women the ability to speak their minds, and have shared experiences with the other young women participants. Given that the focus of this research study is to understand young *women's* experiences, the single-sex focus group was ideal to collect data representative of the target demographic. The mixed-sex focus groups enabled the GWU Capstone team to identify divergent thinking between young men and young women in Thailand, and to collect different insights.

The GWU Capstone team developed a separate set of questions for the student groups and the former MPs. Each question sought to address the initial research questions, and so were designed based on the literature review, with consultation with NDI's country office. Interviews were semi-structured, allowing for variation and follow-up questions. A full list of interview questions can be found in Appendix A.

As part of the in-depth interviews, the GWU Capstone team adapted an activity called the *Power Flower* (Figure 1). This participatory approach allows interviewees to engage actively in the process by providing information on power relations and identities. Participants are asked to explain the dominant culture in their society through sharing which social identities they perceive as wielding the most power or influence in their communities. Participants were prompted to then reflect on how their individual social identities are situated in relation to the previously identified dominant culture.

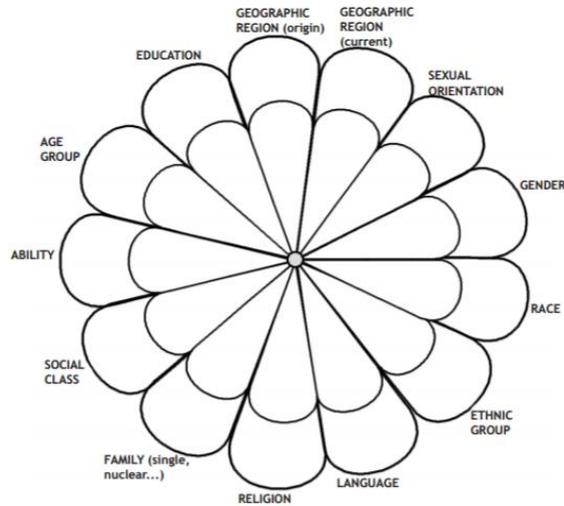


Figure 1. Illustration of a "Power Flower"

The center of the flower is divided into six to eight segments, with inner and outer petals, each representative of one facet or category of social identity. The outer petals were filled in by participants and describe the dominant or powerful identities in their society. Participants reflected on their own social identity and filled in the inner petals. The objective of this exercise was to help participants visualize how close, or how distant, each person was to the power-dominant identity of their current society.

D. Modifications to Research Design

Immediately following the first focus group and initial round of in-depth interviews, research questions were modified based on participants' reactions and responses, and the challenges posed by translation. In several instances, word choices resulted in misunderstandings on the intended meanings of questions. For example, one of the original questions asked whether students participated in any "community service" activities through their schools. When translated as-is, students were confused, as their conception of "community" was different than that of the researchers'. Students interpreted "community" to mean their hometowns, while the research intended to see whether students participated in any activities outside of school, such as volunteer service. The research team worked with NDI's country office staff to implement changes to better reflect the intended meaning of the question.

E. Transcription and Coding Methodology

The results of the focus groups and in-depth interviews were analyzed to develop a series of codes representing the most common, cross-cutting themes that arose throughout participant interviews in Thailand. Several of these codes touched on concepts discussed in the literature review, including the prevalence of gender norms, the importance of visibility, the skills and confidence gap, and the influence of political systems.

F. Limitations

Some of the limitations encountered during the field research included:

- **Thai Political Context:** Regime changes have created a political culture in Thailand where discussions on politics, especially democracy, are sensitive, even bordering on taboo. Under the current Administration, open conversations about government are infrequent and uncommon. Throughout the research process, any discussions on politics and government had to be approached with caution. It was important to be aware of the political context and cultural implications while interviewing participants.
- **Time and Distance:** Due to travel constraints, participant selection was limited to Bangkok and its immediate surrounding areas. The number of participants was also partly determined by the amount of time the research team could spend conducting interviews (5 days in total).
- **Participation Selection:** Related to time and distance constraints, this research was limited in the number of accessible individuals for focus groups and interviews. Many the students interviewed attended well-regarded schools in Bangkok, and several participants had prior international experiences, attended international schools, or had been exposed to different political systems at a younger age. Their predisposed knowledge, which is not necessarily indicative of the greater majority of youth their age, may have had an impact on the qualitative findings.
- **Translation:** Several interviews and focus groups required the use of a translator. While this allowed us to access a group of students we couldn't have otherwise interviewed, the translation itself provided challenges. For example, we were unable to pick up on all participant interaction, and some words and phrases may not have been easily translatable in our questions and/or the participants' responses.

III. KEY FINDINGS

This section will provide analysis on the following major themes taken from interviews conducted in urban Bangkok and in rural Samut Sakhon:

Theme 1: Gender Norms

- Visibility
- Skills and Confidence
- Qualities of a Leader
- Violence

Theme 2: Young People

- Family
- Education
- Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

Theme 3: Political System

- Social Connections
- Citizenship

Theme 1: Gender Norms

Gender norms in Bangkok and Samut Sakhon were critical to understanding the barriers to young women’s political participation and substantive representation. A contradictory perception of gender equality was consistent in interviews, when a participant would first assert that women and men were equal, but later delineate experiences that insinuated otherwise.

“Generally, men are given more importance than women. Even though they allow women some opportunities, they still don’t let women take control.”

- Female Student

Participants noted that women are underestimated regarding their intelligence and capability. A female participant explained that people believe boys are cleverer than girls and are surprised when they meet a highly educated woman. She went on to say that a woman needs a higher level of education than a man to be valued equally. In separate interviews, four participants mentioned that, when it comes to division of labor, women and girls are often tasked with administrative tasks such as “paperwork,” “documentation,” and “arranging;” whether this is in school or in government.

Women and girls are expected to fulfill reproductive and domestic roles, such as bearing and

rearing children, cooking meals, and performing housework. Girls have less time for extracurricular activities or even for full-time school. In an all-female focus group in Samut Sakhon, nearly all participants said that after school, they went home to help their mothers and siblings. Not only do these domestic roles perpetuate time poverty among young women but they also restrict women and girls to private domains like the home.

Regarding characteristics, a male participant mentioned that women and girls are expected to be “quiet, nice, and calm,” which is the opposite of how politicians tend to be portrayed. Girls “worry about their image and don’t get involved.” One of the male politicians spoke about how women and men are judged differently: a man could get away with having two wives but a woman could not do the same. A female politician believed that so few women run for office because women are judged unfairly and that “life is difficult in politics.”

Participants were asked whether they wanted to change power dynamics in their society, and if so, how. The most common response was using education to make this change. Through education, girls could gain the knowledge and confidence to voice their opinions. Education can also engage boys to think more progressively about gender issues. Another idea was for women leaders to uplift young girls in the way that young boys have been encouraged by leaders in their communities. Finally, two participants suggested that girls should have more outlets to voice their opinion, whether this is through conversations with political leaders or on social media pages.

A. Visibility

Literature on youth and women’s political participation reveals that “visibility” and positive representation of female political leaders is critical to enhancing young women’s political aspirations. The issue of visibility was raised by both female and male participants, who explained if and how they learned about female politicians, their personal observations of female leaders, and how women in politics were represented in the media.

“The gender quota is not helpful in raising women’s visibility. Politics are cruel to women, and it’s a harder life for women than for men.”
- Male former MP

Participants in each focus group were asked whether they learned about female political leaders in grade school. All 34 participants said “no.” When later asked to list female politicians they knew, most mentioned Yingluck Shinawatra - the former prime minister of Thailand and predecessor of her political brother, Thaksin Shinawatra - but struggled to name many more. In

2014, women comprised only 6 percent⁴ of Thailand's national parliament, which could explain why it was difficult for participants to name female politicians - as there were comparatively few. A unanimous "no" in response to whether school curriculum addressed female politicians underlines how women are often written out of history.

During one of the all-female focus groups, one of the participants insisted that women and men have equal rights because today's women can work and lead businesses. The same participant described a time when she visited a parliamentary session and noticed far fewer female members of parliament compared to males, and that the women did not speak up often. This moment highlighted the issue of representative and substantive equality - that is, equality in numbers versus equality in influence.

B. Skills and Confidence Gap

Recent studies revealed that girls are equally as politically confident as boys until they reach high school, when that figure drops by half.⁵ Development programming tends to focus on young women's health, education, economic power, and leadership capabilities, but does not delve further into civic and political engagement. Young women's realization of their own potential to become leaders in their communities is critical.

"I think we need more experience and more perspective, more about society...I feel like we are a new generation, so we don't really care much about people around us.... So, yeah, I think we need more time, experience, knowledge."
- Female Student

While it is important to equip young people, and young women with the skills they need to be able to communicate, and think critically and creatively, it is essential to first equip them with confidence-building support that reinforces their ability that they too have a voice and a right to make that voice heard in public spaces.

Throughout the research process, a gap emerged between young women's self-confidence, and the confidence in themselves to run for office - whether that was going to be in the future, or for president of their current student body. Many male and female participants had difficulty articulating the types of skills required to be a leader - and, for those that could, revealed that these skills were not taught in school.

⁴ World Bank Data. "Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments."

<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SG.GEN.PARL.ZS>

⁵ Phillips, Katelyn. "Needing a Longer Runway: Inspiring Your Women's Political Engagement."

DemocracyWorks. <https://www.demworks.org/needing-longer-runway-inspiring-young-women-s-political-engagement>

Participants indicated that their schools focused more on the issues leaders dealt with, rather than on the skills those leaders used. For instance, one participant in a political science program noted that her class learned about diplomacy as a career track. When asked to describe the skills of a diplomat, the participant stated that she learned about the issues diplomats work on, such as economics or terrorism, but not the types of skills they possess.

Most participants stated they would be comfortable expressing their opinions in front of their friends and peers, but some participants acknowledged that, if she were to praise “democracy,” those in favor of the Military rule would automatically assume she was criticizing the Thai political system.

C. Qualities of a Leader

In addition to identifying the skills needed, participants were asked to talk about the qualities they look for in a leader. Responses included sacrifice, integrity, and credibility as well as the ability to control, mediate, and care about others. When asked whether women should be in leadership positions in government, all participants answered “yes,” however their explanations indicated that female politicians were expected to possess innate qualities or focus on women’s issues.

"I think it's an awareness of self-sacrificing. That's very important. Something you really have to dig down in their heart."
- Female former MP

“Sacrifice” was a quality that many participants looked for in their leaders. There was a perception among participants that those who enter politics must be willing to sacrifice their time, money, and family life, for the benefit of others. Women in politics have more to sacrifice in this regard because of the reproductive and domestic roles that they are expected to assume. One of the female politicians, who was unmarried and without children, spoke about how her entry into politics was made easier by the fact that she did not have children to care for and could personally finance her campaign.

The explanations as to why more women should be in government tended to vary. One participant said that more women should be in government because they make up half the population. Two others said that women should be in government because they are less aggressive than men and are not “too quick to fight.” Participants also mentioned that women should be speaking on behalf of other women. “Attentive,” “caring,” “prepared,” and “equally able,” were additional adjectives used to describe female leaders.

D. Violence

Although there were no direct questions regarding violence in politics or gender-based violence more broadly, the issue of violence against women was raised as a concern in both focus groups and in-depth interviews. One of the female politicians explained that she often meets and interacts with her constituents at local cultural events. Since the military coup, her family has been especially worried for her safety and feels more comfortable if she attends these events with her father, brother, and team.

One way I talk to my constituents is by going to their cultural ceremonies. If I go alone, my family will be concerned whether it is safe for me or not, but I have a team that can make sure that no one will come take me somewhere - like in this situation we have the coup d'état in Thailand. Military soldiers come to the area. My family is really, really concerned that this problem will happen to me."
- Female former MP

In one of the mixed-gender focus groups, participants spoke about institutional discrimination against girls in the form of scholarship preferences. Per the respondents, educational institutions do not grant girls scholarships to study abroad due to a fear that they may be abducted and trafficked. Lastly, a few focus group participants spoke about their interests in anti-rape efforts and personal experiences with domestic violence.

Theme 2: Young People

Due to the hierarchical structure of Thailand, age was a significant barrier to engagement identified by participants. Although many participated in Youth Councils or similar activities, the majority expressed their age as a key restriction to having their voice be heard by the government and adults more broadly. Young women indicated that if older members of their communities engaged in dialogue with young people, it tended to be with young men. This generational divide was described as a major barrier for relating to or getting involved with the political system. Strong feelings of disconnect were expressed between young people and older individuals elected to government.

"Maybe it's the culture in Thailand, the perspective and mentality of people that young people should respect the older, the older don't take us serious, the young generation."
- Female Student

The former members of parliament also expressed a lack of meaningful dialogue with their younger constituents while in office. Time was mentioned as a serious constraint on the ability of female students to engage with local leadership, both by the MPs and by students themselves. In Samut Sakhon, the young women interviewed mentioned that most their days were spent at school and home, helping parents with chores. This limited their ability to participate in activities beyond school, including anything related to politics.

Age was also described by the female former MPs as a significant barrier faced when entering parliament. Beyond the legal age restrictions, challenges arose from being a younger individual within the party. One young woman described how difficult it was to excel within her new position at first with little experience or guidance from her peers. Another shared that she was discouraged by her own party who claimed that she was too young to run for office.

"I have problem with those men, you know. Not really a problem... but they feel that this is too early to run for office. Too young, you can wait."
- Female former MP

Overall, young women tended to describe feeling greater restrictions due to their age than young men. They described feeling as if their opinion was not heard or respected by older generations. Lack of voice, often due to a combination of their age and gender, resulted in young women expressing a disconnect with politics.

A. Family

Because of their age, young women have less decision-making power and autonomy within their households, which makes them subject to their parents' views on political participation. One female student spoke about how her parents encourage her to express her opinions, which she finds inspiring.

Another female student explained that she does not discuss her political opinions with her father because they have differing views. But, she added, her father allows her to make her own decisions in life, for which she is grateful, since many of her friends do not have that freedom.

"Family has impact on all others. If family teach their children well, then at some point their children could get education and the social status needed to have power."
- Female Student

One male student talked about his parents' disapproval of his interest in politics. He explained that they were worried about his safety and equated activism with corporal punishment. Both female politicians interviewed mentioned having support from their families. One said that for female candidates, it is particularly difficult to succeed without family support.

B. Education

As the previous sections have illustrated, young women and men need the skills, confidence, and support from their communities to engage confidently in political life. Civic education can be broadly defined as the "processes that affect people's beliefs, commitments, capabilities, and

actions as members or prospective members of communities.”⁶

Generally, civic education curricula in schools can include discussion of controversial issues and provision of hands-on experience in government (such as through student government). Civic programs in school allow students to understand who has the full rights and obligations of a citizen; what are the responsibilities of citizens in the community; and what is the relationship between government and citizens.

In Thailand, where the political system is currently led by the military, which has influence over curriculum, the research questions tried to identify what, if any, civic education exists in Thai schools, and whether this could be a potential avenue for future programming.

Participants were asked whether they participated in community service activities through their schools; if they learned about women in government or parliament in schools, and if they could name any; and whether they could relate or identify with local leaders when they learned about government in school.

Respondents indicated they learned primarily about the history of Thailand in school, rather than contemporary issues. Building on this, several respondents noted that professors focused primarily on the “what” of an event, rather than the “why,” to critically analyze the catalyst for historical events.

Some participants noted that the education system in rural areas is much poorer than that in Central Bangkok, and alluded that this may be a possible reason why young women and men from the rural areas are less involved in civic activities. One participant stated that he did not learn the skills required to be a good leader in school, and instead learned “how to be a good laborer.”

“There is less emphasis on learning the whys, and a greater emphasis on history. Less on the contemporary issues in politics. There’s a lack of understanding on which beliefs each party has.”
- Male former MP

“The history class taught us about nationalism, like, ‘this is why we won the war,’ but we didn’t learn what caused it.”
- Male Student

As previously stated, most participants had difficulty with naming female politicians, except for Yingluck Shinawatra. A female student from a university in Bangkok could name Hillary Clinton and Aung San Suu Kyi, but she herself was unable to name any female Thai politicians. A female focus group participant spoke about how she attended a parliamentary session and

⁶ Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. “Civic Education.” <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/civic-education/>

noticed that there were very few women MPs and that they did not speak much. Across all interviews, there was a noticeable desire among young women to see more women in politics, so that “women could speak for women” and so “women leaders could “help bring in younger women.”

C. Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

Technology is a central tool for young people to engage with each other and the political system, but is often not accessible or used effectively as a form of civic engagement. In some cases, including Thailand, Internet use is restricted by the government and monitored for political activity.

“We’re more like on technology, we don’t really connect with people that much anymore.”
- Female Student

As mentioned in the Literature Review, young women are often subject to higher levels of harassment and lower levels of accessibility to the Internet than their male counterparts.

In interviews conducted through this research, however, there was not a pronounced difference in the online experience of our male and female participants. Both young men and young women expressed the prevalence of social media in everyday life and mentioned mobile apps used to receive regular news updates, in addition to referencing several social networking sites. Only one interview question specifically explored this topic (see Appendix), so further research is necessary to better evaluate the gendered aspects of ICT usage in Thailand.

One of the major themes that arose throughout responses on this topic concerned the high rates and general pervasiveness of cell phone usage. Students referred to the tendency of themselves and their peers to spend large amounts of time on social media on their phones in contrast to older generations.

This statement echoed observations of the participants. In general, both young men and women checked their phones throughout interviews and focus groups. In some cases, they requested to post photos or engage with the research team on social networking sites.

“We should use more social media. I mean, all of the public information should be distributed to citizens in more exciting ways.”
- Female former MP

ICT was also identified as a potential method to encourage civic engagement by both students and former politicians. One female former politician mentioned it would be a beneficial way to reach out to constituents, but the current government is not taking advantage of it.

Theme 3: Political System

The current environment regarding politics in Thailand can best be described as sensitive. With the National Council for Peace and Order, part of the current military-led Administration, controlling the media, imposing internet censorship, and declaring martial law and curfews nationwide, participants were understandably cautious in their responses to questions pertaining to Thailand's current political rule.

"I think that when you engage in politics, especially in this special circumstance, you have some price to pay."
- Male Student

Questions included what participants would define as a "good Thai citizen," and whether participants felt they could discuss politics with friends or community leaders. More specific questions were asked to young female participants and former politicians, including whether they think young women should participate in government (and in what roles), and if they feel that it is harder for young women to participate in civic life.

"The pro is that the country is more developed and there's more rule, but the cons are that the military makes it hard to express opinions. Opinions are controlled."
- Female Student

In terms of fear of retribution, one female student noted that speaking in politics in Thailand can be unsafe, so whenever she and her friends talk about politics, they do so in a secretive manner. Another female student stated that, while she and her friends do discuss politics frequently, it is usually international, not domestic, and she feels comfortable doing so as she is part of a political science program in her university.

A. Social Connections

Related to economic class, participants highlighted the need for social connections to participate in politics. Connections were important not only when running for office but also when seeking acceptance to a high-quality school that would later qualify one for an elected position. Family background and economic status was closely tied to this idea of social capital, particularly among young women, with several female students expressing that their peers from wealthier or politically active families were more likely to be given opportunities for political engagement.

The importance of social connections most often came up through the Power Flower activity. Many inserted the word "connections" over their blank petal as a key aspect of power relations in Thailand. One female student explained that she had chosen to attend Chulalongkorn University, rather than a school in the north, to develop a social network in Bangkok that would lead to a

"There are many female politicians who are inherited position from their family. They can do well, but they have different mentalities."
- Female former MP

better career. This theme was prevalent among both male and female participants, but often had negative connotations when it came to female politicians.

Each of the former MPs interviewed had prior political connections. Among the female MPs, one was the daughter of a politician and the other described close friendships with party leadership prior to running for her position. Among the male politicians, one was the son of a politician and the other had made valuable political connections during his time in business. Social connections were seen to both assist young women seeking political office while simultaneously affecting their credibility in a negative way.

B. Citizenship

The definition of ‘citizenship’ and how young men and women relate to it significantly influenced their feelings towards political participation. Students defined citizenship in a variety of ways, with several clear differences in roles depending on gender. For young men, military service was considered an important but controversial aspect of being a Thai citizen. Several young men expressed their lack of support for mandatory conscription and their opinion that it should be abolished. This led to larger feelings of frustration towards the Thai government and their lack of ability to express opinions that related to the military.

“You can’t express your opinion in the military. You can’t check the military.”
-Male Student

Young women, conversely, did not have as clear of an outline or obligation of service to their communities. When students did bring up military roles for women, they involved working “as a note taker” or another secretarial role. This made citizenship a difficult concept for young women to define. When asked how they would describe the ‘perfect Thai citizen,’ many female respondents struggled in formulating their definitions. They tended to reference larger cultural ideals, such as the Thai concept of sacrifice, without defining specific behaviors or attributes that would constitute citizenship.

In addition to differences based on gender, there was an overall trend of rural and urban students responding to questions around citizenship differently. Both groups of students highlighted the importance of sacrifice, but students in Samut Sakhon extended this idea to include other aspects of the current military-led Administration’s core values. The students in Samut Sakhon explained that they learned about the Administration’s core values in their schools, but the students in Bangkok described having little to no civic education in their schools. The majority had only ever learned of government through their history.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations include general considerations to guide future NDI programming. This section begins with a brief outline of three political systems, including non-democracies, fragile democracies, and democracies, to address potential differences that arise from varying levels of democracy across states. This section concludes with a discussion on the potential limitations to the recommendations.

The recommendations are divided into three main themes: *civic education, programming for engaging young people, and programming for female politicians*. Each suggestion for future programming is made through an intersectional approach, understanding it is important to examine the role of gender, age, and rural and urban differences throughout design and implementation.

Accompanying this section, the research team developed a series of questions to be considered throughout curriculum and program development for increasing young women's political participation (see Appendix B). These questions serve as a tool to account for contextual differences across countries and communities.

Framework for Political Systems and Impact on Recommendations

Differences in political systems across countries can play a significant role in determining the type of programming which would lead to the biggest impact on female political participation. The same interventions that would be appropriate in a stronger democracy, like South Africa, may not necessarily be feasible in a country with strict authoritarian rule. To account for these differences, the research team utilized a framework of three separate types of political systems to inform recommendations:

Non-Democracies

Programming in non-democratic states must work to engaging young women in politics while recognizing the potential constraints on free speech and need for political sensitivity. Non-democratic states are often characterized by authoritarian rule, an absence of free elections, and varying degrees of censorship. The current political environment in Thailand, for example, would be classified as a non-democratic state where additional considerations regarding sensitivity and safety are necessary when implementing programs.

Recommendation 1: Encourage Participation and Promote Gender Equality through Civic Education

Civic education, when taught at an early age, shapes students' perceptions of their identity and their relationship to citizenship. As previously discussed, the political participation of young women in Thailand was influenced by what students had learned about their government through school. Civic education should do more than providing a historical context, instead equipping students with the social understanding of human rights and justice while providing skills to become leaders. Such education, therefore, must be gender mainstreamed to effectively empower young girls for political leadership.

The most significant recommendation concerning civic education would be to alter the system to be more gender sensitive. In the Republic of Ireland, for example, the Civics, Social and Political Education (CSPE) Programme directed at 12-15-year-old young people provides teaching resources for including gender sensitive material to their curriculum.⁷ The framework includes economic, political, legislative, and social policies that generate gender inequality into their teachings. Working with national ministries of education to incorporate more gender-sensitive programming is not necessarily feasible, however, particularly in non-democratic and authoritarian societies.

Where it is not possible to inform the existing civic education curriculum, it is recommended to complement classroom learning with activities that allow young men and women to engage differently with the material being learned in the classroom. This type of programming would differ based on the content of the civic education curriculum and the surrounding political system.

In non-democracies, such as monarchies like Bahrain, civic education serves as a means to develop strong patriotic values and teach what it means to be “good citizen”. A similar trend was seen in the responses of students in Thailand. There is the potential to supplement this rhetoric-heavy learning through engagement opportunities for young men and women:

- Develop programs for young people that connect the concepts being learned in school with current social issues. For example, offer debates or forums where young men and

⁷ Arnot, Madeleine, “Gender, Education, and Citizenship.” *Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2003/4*, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001467/146734e.pdf>

women can discuss existing inequalities and the linkages to national history. This participatory element would also enable students to practice their skills for social-based issues and may lead to increased engagement.

- Offer seminars that highlight inspiring women within the national, cultural, or religious history. This provides young people the opportunity to learn about these figures, often left out of classroom history, and discuss with each other the impact they had on society.
- Provide opportunities for students to demonstrate the ideals of citizenship taught in school, such as sacrifice for others, through community engagement and service activities. Allowing students to plan these events themselves can further enrich their leadership confidence and capabilities.

In fragile democracies, where the level of democracy differs between states, civic education can take many different forms. In Nepal, for example, civic education is “human rights-based” and teaches the mechanisms of peace to promote participation in democratic citizenship.⁸ It is necessary to understand the key elements of civic education curriculum before implementing programs. This curriculum can be complemented with activities that highlight gender disparities and promote greater visibility of women in politics. Recommendations include:

- Identify an existing entry point where students are currently participating in after-school activities and establish a partnership. In Thailand, for example, this entry point could be considered the Youth Network where the students were already engaged in social campaigns. Through the partnership, provide leadership education and training to involved students, particularly young women, in order to give them tools to be successful in the organization and increase their political participation later in life.
- Similar to non-democracies, highlight women who have successfully engaged in politics through educational events for young people. In fragile democracies, there is the potential of including women who have been elected to government. A speaker series of female MPs for young women, for example, could increase the visibility of women elected to government.

⁸Smith, Melinda. 2017. "Nepal: Lessons From Integrating Peace, Human Rights, And Civic Education Into Social Studies Curricula And Textbooks". <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002347/234790E.pdf>.

- Offer gender-sensitive training to teachers to address the inherent gender bias that exist within the education system. This includes the tendency of favoring young men to student-elected leadership positions, such as class president, and the previously mentioned lack of women present in national histories. Training could include activities that reveal personal gender biases such as the hidden bias tests produced by Project Implicit.⁹

In democracies, civic education serves as a means of building and supporting democratic norms. In contrast with the previous political systems discussed, democratic civic education provides a mechanism for students to challenge current institutions through open political discourse. Historical patriarchal norms are still enforced through many aspects of civic education, however, and young women do not participate in these conversations at the same rates as young men. Recommendations for programs include:

- Capitalize on democratic moments that are discussed in school, such as election season, by hosting debates and mock elections. A parallel ‘election’ that allows young men and women under the legal voting age to cast ballots for President, for example, would promote political awareness at an earlier age. The results could be published and shared, potentially contributing to a larger national conversation on the role of young men and women in politics.
- Create programming that highlights, elevates, and emphasizes the role of women in government in addition to the male figures learned about in school. As in fragile democracies, this may involve events that allow young women to hear about the experiences of successful women in politics. Where possible, develop a mentorship program between young women and elected local officials that would allow for more personal dialogue.
- In addition to connecting young women with mentors in politics, a mentorship program that links young girls with older female students in leadership positions within their own communities may empower them to seek similar roles later in life.

⁹ "Project Implicit". 2017. *Implicit.Harvard.Edu*. <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/>.

Recommendation 2: Increase Opportunities for Young Women to Obtain Skills and Gain Confidence

A main takeaway from existing research, reinforced by fieldwork in Thailand, was the importance of creating programming that increases young girls' confidence. During a focus group in Samut Sakhon, many of the participants were quick to say gender equality existed in their society, but followed it with "boys have all the opportunities."

To address this, programming should create opportunities that allow young girls to recognize their potential and provide them with skills to become leaders. Many international agencies have focused on the social and economic empowerment of women, potentially due to this being an easier point of entry than civic empowerment given potential political sensitivities.¹⁰ Working to increase young women's skills and confidence, however, should be done in tandem with understanding their roles as citizens. It is especially important that programs highlight roles for women beyond voting, including the potential to run for office.

Political ambition for office is dependent on the communities surrounding young women, including their family, teachers, and peers. The gender imbalance in political ambition can be mitigated if girls are appropriately encouraged to consider themselves as political leaders. Leadership positions in schools, for example, provide a taste of campaigning for an elected position. Young women should be encouraged to run for these positions and supported throughout the process. These opportunities can appear different in each of the three political systems, given the local and social context.

In non-democracies, such as Thailand, participants spoke of Youth Councils and student governments as mechanisms of pursuing leadership. As previously mentioned, working in already established networks in schools and through extracurricular programs can increase young women's participation. Encouraging young girls may be difficult when majority of the leadership positions are male-dominated, but programs that work for equal gender representation in student governments and provide support throughout campaigning could address this challenge.

Recommendations include:

- Similar to programs previously mentioned, mentorship facilitation, which connects

¹⁰ Carothers, Thomas. 2017. "Democracy Support Strategies: Leading With Women's Political Empowerment". *Carnegie Endowment For International Peace*. <http://carnegieendowment.org/2016/09/14/democracy-support-strategies-leading-with-women-s-political-empowerment-pub-64534>.

female university students with female high school students, could increase interest in leadership positions within Youth Networks. This could be helpful for young girls in high school as working to increase confidence at a young age can be impactful for them to recognize their potential, especially as engaged citizens, later in life.

- Facilitate activities to address the rural and urban divide through a leadership-training program for young women in both demographics, hosted in a neutral location. This would help facilitate a network between schools in both areas and teach leadership skills and qualities, highlight female politicians, and offer instruction on what campaigning looks like to both groups. A ‘leadership academy’ like this could connect social issues to learning, expanding on a culture that already exists but assigning real leadership qualities and features to young girls’ experience.
- Design activities that engage young boys in a conversation on citizenship and challenge their perception of women in society. It is essential to create a space where both young women and men can work together without feeling dominated by one gender. Programming could influence early socialization of gender-neutral tasks, and valuing contributions from either gender equally. Such dialogue also allows both young girls and young men to reflect on their perception of their own identities, and how they fit in as citizens.

In fragile democracies, creating opportunities in leadership for young girls in politics can be more deliberate. While the emphasis remains on expanding their leadership and skills, young women and men in fragile democracies should have an easier time connecting social and political issues to learning due to more open governments. Recommendations include:

- Create a network of young women aimed at empowerment, which heavily addresses politics, and includes both education and practicum. Female participants and focus could lead this network on women in politics, how these leaders found confidence, and how they could be role models for young girls.
- Facilitate participatory engagement activities, such as the Power Flower, that can help young girls build confidence, realize roles of citizenship, and recognize young women as leaders. The Power Flower can be edited to include more conversations and questions surrounding political empowerment and confidence.

- Link young women with organizations to provide internship opportunities in professional fields or political-oriented non-profits. On the local level, this exposure could help young girls in either rural or urban environments contribute more to their community and develop leadership skills. Facilitating international internships within more established democracies could give young women an invaluable experience to build their confidence and gain exposure to a different political system.

In democracies, exposure to female politicians as role models is key in expanding confidence and providing opportunities for young women. Removing barriers on the individual, institutional, and socio-cultural level to increase confidence, while difficult, is necessary. Recommendations include:

- Target parents with specific programs in schools, potentially at parent engagement events, and provide ways to encourage young people irrespective of gender to run for student government leadership. This could include tips on how to discuss politics with their children, not just boys, and a database of organizations that work on increasing young women's confidence and political knowledge. Increasing parental support through these mechanisms could close the gender gap in political ambition.
- Promote political science, specifically to young women, as a means of an earlier intervention. In a more rural setting, provide incentives or scholarships for young girls to pursue political science degrees. Like the recent push for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics in the United States, NDI should consider creating a program that highlights the importance of Political Science and the existing gender imbalance. This could be a way to reach young girls' and increase their interest, confidence and therefore skills.
- Offer workshops that tackle self-doubt and confidence levels among young women. This could include discussions on not underselling one's own ability and guidance on how to present personal achievements and skills. Conversations on the difference in perception of gender stereotypes would also give young women a space to discuss the challenges they experience. This programming should seek to embed related classes throughout schools and provide opportunities to practice such leadership skills through Model UN or mock campaigns.

Recommendation 3: Support Female Politicians to Increase Visibility and Reduce the Gender Gap

In addition to targeting young men and women, programming must also support female politicians currently seeking office. These interventions have the potential to create sustainable change by easing the election process for female candidates and encouraging more women to for office. As more women run, more role models are created for young girls interested in a future in politics. If women are supported from the beginning stages of campaigning to the time they are in office, the gender gap in politics may begin to lessen.

Beyond the election process, programming should be designed to address the representative rather than substantive roles typically given to female politicians. Many of these countries, such as Kenya, have legally established gender quotas but do not monitor or enforce them to ensure they are met. If they are met, women are not participating at the same rates as men. This was mentioned multiple times in Thailand in regards to the different roles politicians were seen occupying based on their genders. While it is difficult to encourage substantive government roles, programming can work with elected female officials to develop tools and strategies that give them the opportunity to extend their influence. This section of recommendations highlights potential mechanisms for supporting female politicians.

In non-democracies, while there are few opportunities to engage with women seeking to run for election there is still the potential to increase female voice, particularly on the local level. Community programming that supports women in local leadership positions, whether they be non-governmental or political, can serve as a means of empowerment and have a positive impact on younger generations. Recommendations for these types of programming include:

- Develop a women's support group that offers a safe space to discuss social inequalities, the political process, and general life challenges. This group, although initiated by NDI, should be placed under the control of the participants. The group would allow for women to discuss community problems and identify solutions as well as increase their confidence in their personal decision making power.
- Offer leadership seminars and professional advancement tools for women. These could include computer literacy training, business classes, or other relevant tools. If women are not eligible to win an elected government seat, they may gain influence in other sections of society, with some external support, that could impact future generations.

Fragile democracies provide a greater opportunity for engaging female politicians. The largest challenge in this political system, however, is ensuring that women maintain a substantive presence within the government once they get elected. Programs must acknowledge and directly address the issue of meaningful female representation. Recommendations include:

- Campaign for better monitoring and enforcement of gender quotas. If quotas are not being met, utilize social media to bring attention to the disparity. Include young women and men throughout the process by providing them with social media toolkit and strategies to spread with their own networks.
- In fragile democracies afflicted by conflict, actively advocate for women to participate in the resolution process and obtain a substantive political role. This advocacy can also take the form of social media campaigns that emphasize how few women are currently involved in the peace process. Including women throughout conflict resolution may shift the future political dialogue to be more inclusive of female voices.
- For each upcoming election cycle, offer training seminars and pro-bono campaign manager consultancies to women who are considering running for office. These services would address potential concerns about the economic feasibility of campaigning, as well as hesitations surrounding the larger political process.

In democracies, many of the same challenges from fragile democratic political systems exist. Women often struggle to obtain a substantive role in politics and are underrepresented in government at all levels. To reduce this gap, programs must support women throughout the campaign process and continue to engage with them once they are elected. Recommendations include:

- Host forums for women in government on the local and national level. Invitations to these forums would be extended to all elected female officials, regardless of political party affiliation. The goal of the forums would be to increase discussion among women leaders, give them the opportunity to speak as a collective force, and strengthen relationships with each other that could extend their political influence.
- Directly counter negative social media representations of female politicians throughout their campaigns with positive stories, posts, and radio ads. To further address harassment, develop an online reporting mechanism where individuals can submit incidences of

female politicians are being talked about negatively online. This information should then be made publicly available so that voters can avoid sites where candidates are harassed or discriminated against.

- Host events that allow female politicians to engage with their constituents and share their experiences. These events could offer a gender-focused discussion on what it's like to be a woman in politics. The goal of these discussions would be to incorporate gender into the larger political dialogue.

Limitations to Recommendations

While these general recommendations provide key factors to consider and examples of programming, on-the-ground implementation requires contextual understanding specific local, cultural, religious, and political context of the country of interest. Since these recommendations and the development of a new program look to inform change, it may have a different impact on the local community who are the intended beneficiaries. For example, proposed curriculum adaptation would require proper coordination with education policymakers, school boards, community leaders, parents, and the students, which would be challenging. Furthermore, since the research was conducted in a unique environment, the recommendations provided hope to address potential entry points in various political systems. Additional challenges may be present in the given context that could impact the recommendations in either three of the political systems.

During both the desk research and fieldwork, social media and the role of technology were highlighted. However, the interviews were unable to press on the role of social media as a means of activism for young women and men. Further research will be necessary to learn how best to engage young girls online and how to create a safe space for them to participate virtually.

V. Conclusion

Through this partnership with NDI, the GWU Capstone Team successfully identified key factors that influence young women's political participation and provided recommendations to address these challenges. An initial review of the literature highlighted several themes, including gender, age, education, and political systems, that encompassed a variety of barriers facing young women. Qualitative field research conducted in Bangkok and Samut Sakhon, Thailand, further explored these themes and highlighted the multifaceted aspects of the barriers facing young women.

Based off the data gathered through the field research, a framework for recommendations was developed. This framework included considerations for non-democratic, fragile, and full democratic states. The recommendations provided focused on enhancing civic education and promoting substantive roles for women in politics. Throughout the research process it became evident that to encourage young women's political participation, it is necessary to provide young women with the tools they need through civic education, the confidence to use these tools through empowerment programming, and the space to engage through promoting substantive political roles for women. Programming built on these recommendations will allow young women to use their voice and engage in politics in a meaningful way.

APPENDIX A. RESEARCH DESIGN

A. Purpose

This research seeks to inform the development of new NDI programming by identifying key considerations for filling gaps on young women's political participation and civic engagement. It will specifically examine the relationship between political participation, civic engagement, and empowerment among young women in Thailand.

B. Methods/Participants

To collect information to address this gap, we have selected the following methods:

- **5 Focus Groups** (3 in Bangkok, 2 in Samut Sakhon)

Focus group demographics:

- 7 participants for each focus group
 - Students attending their last year of high school or currently attending university
 - 2 focus group (1 in Bangkok and 1 in Samut Sakhon) with young women participants only
 - 2 mix focus groups (1 Bangkok and 1 in Samut Sakhon) with young women and men
 - 1 mix focus group with former women and men MPs from Pheu Thai Party and the Democrat Party
- **Survey**
 - At the beginning of the focus group, the participants will be asked to complete a short survey. Participants in the focus group can also indicate if they would be interested in volunteering for an in-depth interview. Survey example will be provided later in this Research Design.
 - **10-15 in-depth interviews/stakeholder meetings** (Number contingent on availability and recruitment success)

In-depth Interview Demographics:

- Student leaders (young women and men) from activist groups in University*
- Former MPs (women and men) from Pheu Thai Party and Democrat Party
- Young women students from Bangkok and Samut Sakhon - including focus group participants who may volunteer

*There are several universities and student activist groups in Bangkok. We would ideally like to engage a few of those student leaders (with the hope we can target young women leaders specifically in these spaces) to understand their role in political participation and civic engagement.

Universities -

- Thammasat University
- Student Activist groups

- o Liberal League of Thammasat for Democracy (LLTD)

C. Timeline

The proposed research methods will take place between Monday, March 20th and Friday, March 24th. (More detailed daily schedule TBD)

D. Supplies

- Refreshments for 5 focus groups and in-depth interviews, 40-50 people in total
- Recording device to record responses (NDI Device, and Researchers' iPhones)
- Translated Consent Forms
- Translated Power Flower Activity
- Translated Questions
- Paper and pens as needed

E. Instruments

Introduction example script: Good morning/afternoon! Thank you for your time. We are a group of students from a university in the United States, and we're working with an organization called the National Democratic Institute (NDI). We are really excited to learn more about Thailand from you! This focus group will try to understand your experiences as young women and men like you, and help us fill gaps in research for young women's civic engagement. As you read in our consent form, our conversations today will help us inform NDI's future programs, to help engage young women in civic and governmental life.

Participation is voluntary and confidential. Your name will not be used and you are not obligated to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. If you agree, I will record the interview in order to transcribe your responses for the purposes of research. The recording will not be shared.

If you do not want to be recorded, please let me know and we will take handwritten notes instead. Are you okay with being recorded?

If you would like us to repeat a question or you would, at any time, like to pause, stop, or even leave, you are free to do so.

Thank you for your time. Do you have any questions before we begin?

May I begin?

Focus Group Questions (Young Women only)

1. What is everyone studying? What do you like to do outside of school?
2. Have you participated in public service activities through your school? If so, what kind of activities?

3. What are the characteristics of a political leader that you look up to?
4. What comes to mind when I say a “good Thai citizen”?
5. Is the “good Thai citizen” different for men and women?
6. Do you consider Military service an important part of civic duty?
7. What comes to mind when I say the “perfect Thai woman”?
8. Did you learn about women in government or parliament in school? What did you learn? Can you talk about a few?
9. In your opinion, should women have leadership roles in government? Why or why not?
10. Do you think it is harder for young women (like yourselves) to participate in civic life? Why or why not?
11. What skills do you think young women would need to engage in civic activities? Do you think you learn these skills in school?
12. In the future, do you see yourself in a leadership role? Do you see that being in public service or government?

Additional Questions for focus groups with young women and men

1. Do you consider Military service an important part of civic duty?
2. When you learn about the government in school, are you able to relate or identify with local leaders? Why or why not?

Focus Group Questions with Young Former MPs (women and men)

1. When did you first aspire to seek a government position? What inspired or motivated you?
2. What did you learn about the government in school? Provide examples, if you can think of any.
3. What were the reactions of your peers and family when you ran for election?
4. What were the biggest challenges you faced during the election?
5. What were some of the biggest challenges you faced once you began working within parliament?
6. What was your relationship like with your male and female colleagues in parliament? Were there differences?
7. What impact did being an MP have on other aspects of your life? Do you feel it helped increase your decision-making power?
8. What was your relationship like with the youth you represented? What was your relationship like with youth activist or groups?
9. Do you think young women should participate in government? In what roles? Why?

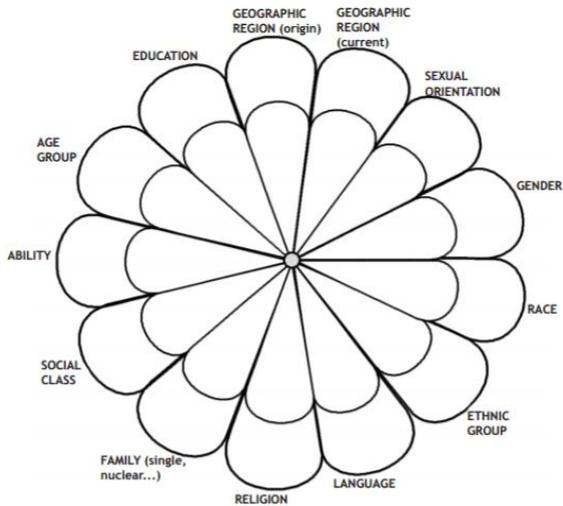
In-depth Interview Questions

1. Do you and your friends talk about politics/government?
2. Do you learn about government outside of school? If yes, how? (media, family, etc.)
3. Do you think young people’s opinions are valued by the community? Why or why not?
4. Would you be comfortable in expressing your opinion?
5. Do you think young women and young men’s opinions are valued in the same way? Why or why not?
6. Do you think there’s a need for change for young women’s opinions to be valued?

Power Flower Activity (With Translators)

This activity is designed for participants to identify the dominant culture in their society by sharing which social identities they perceive wield the most power in their communities. Participants will then reflect on how their individual social identities are situated in relation to the dominant culture. The center of a daisy-type flower is divided into 8 segments, each representing one facet or category of social identity. This center is surrounded by a double set of petals, one outer and one inner. The outer petals are filled in by participants and describe the dominant or powerful identities in society. The inner petals are filled in by participants and describe their own social identity. The object of the exercise is to discover how close, or how distant, each person is to the dominant identity of their current society. The more inner petals match the outer (dominant) ones, the more social power that person possesses. One petal will be left blank for the participant to identify aspects of social identity that may not be included in the flower but applies to their specific context.

Example:



Petals:

- Gender
- Age
- Ethnicity
- Language
- Religion
- Economic Status
- Education
- BLANK

7. Which “petal” do you think has the most power in your society?

8. Would you want to change any outer petal(s)?
9. If so, how do you think that change can be made?
10. Does this exercise make you feel motivated or discouraged?

In-depth Interview Questions for former MPs (women only)

1. When did your interest in government/parliament begin?
2. Did you have any female role models in government that you looked up to?
3. What were the challenges you faced when first starting in this field? Do those challenges still exist?
4. Do you think young people's opinions are valued by the community? Why or why not?
5. How do you think we can best engage young women to participate in civic life?
6. Are there any activities women in your field do to engage youth, particularly young women?
7. Do you think young men have an easier time relating to this field or being inspired to engage in civic life?
8. Did you find your school encouraged or equipped you with the skills necessary to participate and was it different for you and for the men in your class?
9. What do you wish you were taught in school to better prepare for a leadership role?
10. Do you see more young women being involved in government in the near future? Why or why not?

In-depth Interview Questions for former MPs (men only)

1. When did your interest in government/parliament begin?
2. Did you have any male role models in government that you looked up to?
3. What were the challenges you faced when first starting in this field? Do those challenges still exist?
4. Do you think young people's opinions are valued by the community? Why or why not?
5. How do you think we can best engage young people to participate in civic life?
6. Are there any activities other MPs (including yourself) did to engage youth?
7. Do you think young men compared to young women have an easier time relating to this field or being inspired to engage in civic life?
8. Did you find your school encouraged or equipped you with the skills necessary to participate?
9. What do you wish you were taught in school to better prepare for a leadership role?
10. Do you see more young women being involved in government in the near future? Why or why not?

In-depth questions for student activists

1. What or who inspired you to participate in civic life?
2. Are there equal number of young men and women in this group? If no, why do you think that is?
3. (for young women participant) As a young woman involved in this group, do you feel you face specific challenges that young men may not?
4. Did your classes or school inspire you to take action?

Highest level of education obtained:

Year elected to Parliament:

Age at time of election:

Number of Years in Parliament:

2. Did you ever engage in protest or public demonstration before becoming an MP?

Yes

No

3. Would you be interested in participating in a one-on-one interview following the focus group?

(Answering 'yes' does not signify a binding commitment)

Yes

No

APPENDIX B. QUESTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

General Considerations

To implement the programming discussed in Section IV: Recommendations, it is necessary to consider the following:

1. What are existing constraints due to the political system?

- What is the political system? This crucial in understanding the types of programs that will be most effective in advancing young women's rights and empowering them to seek leadership positions in government.
- What is the current likelihood of engagement among young men and women? Are they discouraged by corruption? Are they capable of expressing opinions?

2. What is the status of women, and what are the cultural and traditional norms that influence it?

- What is the current level of engagement among women? What is the existing level of female representation in politics? Be aware that this can reinforce stereotypes of politics being a male-dominated field.
- What are the different obligations that may be cultural or traditional which exist in society where the program is being implemented? Are women subject to harmful traditional practices? Do they face different societal or familial expectations?

3. What is the status of young women and men in the given society?

- Are youth disenfranchised?
- Are young women further alienated from politics or leadership than their older counterparts? How does socio-economic status, religion, and/or race impact the level of involvement or status of youth?
- Are youth in this community often ignored or excluded from policy?
- Are their barriers to education or limited employment opportunities for youth in this community?
- How do these opportunities differ from young girls and young boys?

4. What is the role of education and how does it differ in rural and urban contexts?

- How, if at all, is education different between the rural and urban schools? Is education different between private and public schools?
- What are the roles of teachers and education policy? Does the state dictate curriculum, particularly for civic education?
- Is the curriculum engaging students on citizenship and does it present a male-dominated experience only?
- Are students, especially young girls, encouraged to share opinions?
- Who informs curricula - is it national or state driven?

5. Are there opportunities for civil society support and local partnerships on the ground working on similar issues?

- Are there local organizations that are working on similar issues?
- What are the opportunities to partner with civil society and leaders to leverage local expertise and provide resources to further young women's empowerment?
- Do these local organizations have key actors to support future programming?

6. What are the religious influences?

- Religion can play a significant role in the politics of a country. What are the implications of both religion and nationalism and how do they relate to the culture of their society?
- Are there inherent gender or age biases because of religious influence?
- How does this impact the education curriculum, especially civic curriculum?
- Will it be necessary to include a religious component in a curriculum that aims to engage young girls?

7. How are foreign relations perceived in the given society?

- The nature of programming is to create positive change - this would mean challenging the status quo, which may not always be perceived positively by a country. It would be important to understand the role of foreign NGOs and their reputation within the given country to best to sensitize programming. Development of such programming should also recognize how NDI and their work is perceived to make the efforts sustainable and effective.

8. How can the program be sustainable and adaptable?

- Since a country's political system is subject to change, how can programming address such shifts? Programming should be sustainable when working closely with local experts, and adaptable when taking account of all previous considerations mentioned.