



TOWARDS ELECTORAL REFORM IN HONDURAS

A TIMELINE

Electoral reforms are deeply needed in Honduras.

In both 2013 and 2017, elections in the country were tainted by concerns of fraud, violent intimidation and widespread irregularities. Following the 2017 elections, violent protests and a crackdown by security forces led to the deaths of 22 civilians and one police officer.

But there is hope for change in Honduras. New electoral organizations and electoral reforms could hold the key to more inclusive, transparent and representative elections.

A process which improves people's trust in elections will reduce feelings of marginalization from the politics. And inclusive reforms could make it more possible for politically under-represented groups to get involved.

NIMD has been working with electoral institutions since 2016. We are engaged in a long-term process to help to

prepare Honduras's institutions for much-needed reforms.

By supporting and upholding electoral reforms, we hope to contribute to their success. But more than that, we have been working directly with new electoral institutions to help them become stronger, more effective and more transparent. This is in line with the recommendations of the Electoral Observation Missions (EOM) of the EU and the Organization of American States.

Setting the scene for electoral reform

NIMD's work towards electoral reform started in 2016. As the country started to contemplate the need to strengthen electoral institutions, NIMD Honduras made steps to create a favourable environment for this process. We held bilateral meetings with both electoral institutions and political parties, as well as trainings to empower political actors to enact electoral legislation and reform proposals.

The importance of this work became clear in the lead-up to the 2017 elections. Voter irregularities in the primary elections give rise to a national debate on the effectiveness of the national ID card and the National Registry of Persons.

The elections themselves made the need for reform even

clearer. The decision of Honduras's Judicial power to allow for the re-election of Juan Orlando Hernández despite a Constitutional ban caused a lack of trust among the electorate. The elections were tarnished by irregularities, electoral violence and unrest.

Calls for profound electoral reforms were made by civil society, the churches and the international community.

Between 2017 and 2019, as a result of these calls and NIMD's lobby efforts, three new electoral bodies were established: the Clean Politics Unit (2017), the Electoral Court (2019) and the National Electoral Court (2019).

This is when our work with electoral bodies in Honduras began in earnest.

Since 2017, we have provided the new electoral bodies with support and guidance in their path to become strong, trusted and effective organizations. We have also helped existing electoral bodies to restructure and increase their effectiveness.



CONTEXT IN HONDURAS

We support:

- Clean Politics Unit
- Electoral Court
- National Electoral Council
- National Registry of Persons
- National Congress (support on electoral and political party reform)

The National Register of Persons introduces a new, more effective biometric ID card for voters. This provides a much clearer system for voting and registration, which will reduce voter irregularities in future.

Congress approves a law requiring electoral lists to have gender parity and alternation of men and women candidates.

This means that men can no longer hold all the top positions on party lists.

2021 general elections loom

In the 2021 primaries, the number of women in eligible positions rose from 21% to 28%.

The National Congress's Technical Committee submits the new draft Electoral Law to Congress.

The law includes reforms to increase inclusion, transparency and trust in Honduras's elections.

228 of the 318 articles have been approved.

We hope the remaining articles will be approved by this May, ahead of the elections in November.

2017-2020

2018-2020

2020

2020-2021

NIMD provides technical, financial and logistical support to new and existing electoral institutions and helps them to become stronger and more effective.

We support each body to develop Communications and Visibility Strategies; increase their transparency and visibility; and foster public trust.

NIMD gives training and supports the National Register on how to roll out the new ID card.

We also help the Register to evaluate and reform its internal systems and procedures.

Together with the Electoral Court, NIMD launches a campaign to encourage political parties to include under-represented groups on their electoral lists.

NIMD supports this by:

- Working with the Forum for Women in Politics to develop the proposal.
- Supporting the Commission of Gender Equality through dialogue and capacity building.

NIMD supports the National Congress's Technical Committee – a multiparty group tasked with developing the bill for the new Electoral Law.

As part of this, we submit an analysis of the current electoral legislation, including recommendations.

We work with political parties to support the approval of the law.

Changes include:

- Reinforcement of the gender quota.
- Changes to financing for political parties.
- Fairer registration for political parties.

NIMD continues to support the debate on the outstanding articles.

We run awareness-raising campaigns on the elections and reach out to political parties to test/influence their approval of the bill.

NIMD CONTRIBUTION

2021 onward

In 2021, general elections will take place. Not all the problems of the past have been resolved. Designing new institutions is one step, but it takes time for them to become organized and operational.

But a lot has been achieved since 2016. Honduras will enter the 2021 elections with new and strengthened electoral institutions. And there is strong hope that the new electoral legislation will also be in place.

In addition, there are new mechanisms to ensure more women have access to politics. There is a new ID and registration system to help keep track of who has voted. And the new electoral bodies, formed between 2017 and 2019, have a strong basis. They have made their first steps towards more transparency and inclusion in Honduras's elections. These developments have the potential to start the process of

re-establishing trust in elections. The achievements we have made are part of this longer process, towards more inclusive, transparent and representative elections in Honduras. Therefore, NIMD is set to continue to support the electoral organizations and facilitate debate between political parties, and between political actors and civil society, on outstanding electoral reform for inclusive democracy.