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# A Guide to Political Party Development

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Working to  
strengthen  
and  
expand  
democracy  
worldwide



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## Preface

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The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) recognizes that political parties form the cornerstone of a democratic society and serve a function unlike any other institution in a democracy. Parties aggregate and represent social interests and provide a structure for political participation. They train political leaders who will assume a role in governing society. In addition, parties contest and win elections to seek a measure of control of government institutions.

NDI conducts a variety of political party programs in three main areas: election campaign techniques, operational and structural development and parties in parliament. Information and technical assistance is provided to new and newly democratic political parties and movements on an inclusive, multiparty basis. The purpose of such programs is to deepen and expand democratic values and practices in transition societies by enabling political parties to play their special role and fulfill their responsibilities in a professional, transparent and peaceful manner consistent with international standards and the laws of their respective societies. In the last 20 years, NDI has worked with democratic parties from across the political spectrum in more than 60 countries around the world.

To collect and examine best practices from its long-standing political party building programs, NDI organized a three-day seminar in Vienna, Austria. The seminar brought together a diverse group of political party experts and experienced NDI staff members.

This guide is one result of that seminar and subsequent discussion and analysis. It attempts to address why political party development is important, how party development can be conducted and what does or does not work in varying situations. It is intended to provide practical insights into this important aspect of expanding democracy, but is not intended to be the last or the exhaustive word on the subject. This guide will evolve as programs are conducted and further lessons are learned.

NDI would like to thank all who assisted in the development of this handbook and the Institute welcomes feedback.

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## **Characteristics of a Democracy**

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Democracy is defined by certain fundamental principles and practices that permeate a society. A primary principle is that all persons are equal and maintain certain individual rights. A democracy exists when citizens are able to participate actively in the life of their society by exercising their individual rights – such as freedom of expression and speech, of assembly and association, of religion and conscience, to petition the government, and to vote in fair elections. \

Another principle of democracy is that government is by the people and exists to serve the people. Legitimate political power originates with citizens and flows from the citizens to the government. The government is responsible for protecting citizen rights, and in turn the citizens grant government temporary power to make decisions on their behalf. In an authoritarian political system, the government demands service from its people without any obligation to secure their consent or respond to their needs. Authoritarian forms of government prevent individuals from choosing their leaders or having a voice in public policy. Decisions are imposed without thought or concern given to the rights of individuals.

The power of a democratic government is limited by a constitutionally defined framework of laws and practices that protect social and political freedoms. Government is organized to prevent one individual or institution from becoming too powerful and prevailing on all issues. In some cases, political power is separated into different government branches – legislative, executive, judicial. Another form of limitation is the establishment of checks on the power exercised by each branch. By dividing responsibilities and placing checks on power and influence, a democratic society limits government abuses and helps ensure the rights of individuals. The power of an authoritarian government, on the other hand, is generally not limited or checked in any way. Because power is centralized and unlimited, the government is able to make arbitrary decisions that may violate the rights of individuals and minority groups. Conversely, a democratic government is inclined, organizationally and procedurally, to make decisions that benefit society at large (or the largest majority of people and groups), rather than a particular individual interest.

Democratic government is given the authority to make decisions through electoral mandate. In other words, citizens choose government representatives. Regular elections allow opposition parties to compete and present alternative policies to the voting public. Citizens are then able to hold government officials accountable by having the periodic right and opportunity to vote them out of office.

Taken together, it may be said that the aforementioned principles and behaviors represent a democratic ideal. The degree to which they are honored and practiced is the degree to which a society can be called democratic.

## **The Critical Role of Political Parties**

A central feature of any modern democracy is the presence of political parties. A political party is a group of citizens organized to seek and exercise power within a political system. All parties participate to some extent in the exercise of political power, whether through participation in government or by performing the role of opposition. Parties are the vehicles by which citizens come together freely to campaign for public office to win a majority of seats in a legislative body, to express their own interests and needs as well as their aspirations for the society in which they live. Without parties, citizens lack alternative vehicles of organization and the potential for concentration and abuse of power is exacerbated. Parties present to the public alternatives in government, policies and people.

Political parties nominate candidates, organize political competition, unify portions of the electorate, translate policy preferences into public policies, and when out of power, they provide a constructive critical opposition. Organized political

parties serve two major purposes – first, they define and express a group's needs in a way that the public and political system can understand. Secondly, they develop enough common ideas among a significant group so that they can exercise pressure upon the political system.

Parties are the vehicles by which citizens come together freely to campaign for public office to win a majority of seats in a legislative body, to express their own interests and needs as well as their aspirations for the society in which they live.

With the widespread growth of electoral democracies in the 1990's, political parties have proliferated around the world. Parties can be found in every continent and every country, and multiparty systems of government have become the primary way to organize politics. Political parties play a vital role in the expansion and consolidation of democracy. A country's electoral system dictates the ways in which parties function in a democracy, which in turn influences its party system. The party system then influences the role and functions of political parties, the types of parties and the development of strong parties.

In most countries, parties are required to fulfill legal obligations for official registration and recognition, including a minimum level of membership, a written constitution and platform, and the election of party leaders. Depending on a variety of factors – such as the type of democratic system, the electoral law, and the historical role of trade unions, religious groups, and ethnic communities – a country may have anywhere from two to 100 registered parties. In some cases, parties may merge or divide over time and new parties may displace older parties by attracting their supporters. However, a stable party system typically has two to 10 parties of consequence. Some parties may be important because they have the capacity to assemble a national majority in presidential elections. On the other hand, small parties can be important by affecting the balance of power in a parliamentary system, and so can decide which larger parties will control government and choose the prime minister. Still other parties can be important



because they represent a particular constituency that is, for example, influential because of economic or social reasons.

In the United States, the world's longest operating democracy, parties have played a fundamentally important role beginning in the republic's early years two centuries ago. Although not mentioned in the U.S. Constitution, and not anticipated by the founding fathers, political parties soon emerged and persisted because they fulfilled basic needs, such as helping organize the priorities of the legislature, identifying alternative candidates and policies, and promoting accountability of the majority. Similar dynamic needs within the British parliamentary system resulted in the development of coherent national political parties early in the 19th century. As the American journalist David Broder has observed, fulfilling those needs requires an "institution that will sort out, weigh, and, to the extent possible, reconcile the myriad of conflicting demands of individuals, groups, interests, communities and regions . . .; organize them for the contest of public office; and then serve as a link between the constituencies and the [people] chosen to govern. When the parties fill their mission well, they tend to serve both a unifying and a clarifying function for the country." The ability of political parties to perform their multiple tasks, including nominating and supporting candidates for public office, contesting and winning elections, and occasionally controlling the reins of government, sets them apart from other voluntary civic organizations in a democracy.

To be sure, not all parties fulfill the political needs of a country in the same way, or to the same extent. Both external and internal factors may affect a party's methods and abilities. For example, the nature of the political system-- whether it is a presidential or parliamentary system, whether electoral balloting is through open or closed lists, whether the legislature is organized around single, or multi-member districts-- will place different demands on a party's structure and strategic planning process. Nascent political parties may be limited by money, organizing skills or an inability to understand the party's distinct role in a democracy. Effective political parties need leaders and organizers who understand the role of political parties in a democratic society, and who are able to use modern techniques of organization, communication, fundraising and training effectively.

In many new and emerging democracies, society is moving from a period of domination by one political party or group. Many of the old assumptions and practices of the former political system have to be discarded if a democratic system is to grow. For example, in countries where political power never changed hands peacefully, new political leaders and citizens alike must come to understand that political opponents are not mortal enemies, and that compromise and the sharing of power are not signs of weakness but are instead essential ingredients of the democratic process. A South African participant in an NDI training described his country's new democracy this way: "We have a ruling party . . . an official opposition party and other smaller opposition parties. They differ in their ideologies and principles, but they also differ in a responsible manner. This is the essence of our experience that other countries should carry with them. When they go back home, they should realize that you don't have to sort out your differences through the barrel of a gun. You can use democratic institutions like a parliament [and] elections."

Building democratic institutions and developing democratic practices is an ongoing, dynamic process. For each country, the road to democracy will be shaped by a number of political, social and historical factors. The leaders of new political parties have a special role to play. The legacy of authoritarianism in political parties, as well as in the overall organization of society, makes it imperative that a new democratic ethic be the guiding light that informs and inspires party leaders dedicated to bringing about a democratic change.

### **Focusing on the Local level**

"The foundation first" is a motto that party leaders and organizers should keep in mind when they seek to build a successful political party. Thomas P. ("Tip") O'Neill, a state and federal legislator from Boston, Massachusetts who rose to become the Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives in the 1980s, often explained to his party colleagues that "all politics is local." A significant portion of a party's time, attention and money should be directed to the local level. Ultimately, the strength and stability of a national political party and the success of its candidates for elective office at every level are closely related to the number of active, enthusiastic party members and supporters at the local level. The local base of a political party, just like the roots of a tree, must be strong if the party is to grow and succeed. Party leaders may understand the importance of local party building, but in practice they do not all act accordingly, or contribute fully to this democratic process. The result is often a party that is uncompetitive and not able to assume control of government.

Party leaders and organizers cannot forget about the central importance of the individual member. Without members, a party's leaders, no matter how eloquent or smart they might be, are doomed to occupy the margins of their country's democratic political life. Moreover, party leaders cannot afford to forget that ultimate policy-making authority is, and should always be within membership of the party if the party is going to be genuinely democratic.

### **Democracy in Political Parties**

Leaders and supporters of political parties have a critical role to play in a successful transition to democracy. To promote democracy in their country, however, political parties must be democratic themselves. If parties do not practice and honor democratic values in their internal affairs, then they are unlikely to do so when they win elections and begin to govern. As a party activist from Zimbabwe stated: "How do you reconcile wanting to limit leadership succession within the nation, when you don't limit it within the party? Parties must learn to accept limited terms of party leadership, then they can inculcate these expectations for the national leadership." Political parties -- whether in power or in opposition -- have a duty to support and protect democratic values and human rights within their own organizations.

Generally, no political party will declare that it is undemocratic. Democracy has become such a compelling idea that even military rulers and civilian dictators are eager to proclaim their devotion to democratic norms. In a political party, however, democracy will not flourish merely

because it is proclaimed. In fact, internal party democracy can be compromised by such factors as: insular management and communication structures; a lack of leadership change and opportunity; and marginalized party members. Sometimes these factors create a situation in which a few individuals dominate party affairs without proper regard for the membership at-large. Such a situation precludes inclusiveness and the opportunity for members to shape a party's policies.

A party's commitment to democratic principles should be reflected not only in its written constitution, but also in the day-to-day interaction among leaders and members. That is, a party must be committed to practicing democratic behavior. A democratic party will:

- C Allow members to express their views freely.
- C Promote the membership of women, youth and indigenous groups.
- C Encourage participation by all members.
- C Be tolerant of different ideas.
- C Abide by agreed upon rules and procedures for decision-making.
- C Hold leaders accountable to members and supporters.

## **Party Organization**

To succeed, a political party needs a number of attributes, including enthusiastic members, informed and committed leaders, and practical, innovative ideas for improving the country. All of these attributes, however, cannot guarantee success if the party is poorly organized. If there are not discernable decision making procedures, if people within the party do not understand their roles and responsibilities, and if communication within the party is not clear and frequent, even a party with good ideas and well-intentioned members can fail to achieve its goals. Too often, political parties make the mistake of devoting all of their resources and energy to short-term election campaigns, rather than to building and maintaining a solid, democratic party organization. Party organization must be a priority for party leaders before issues of campaign organization are addressed.

Although the structure of parties may vary, a typical organizational model will include party committees ranging from the national to the local levels. At every level, there needs to be clarity about exact roles, responsibilities and authority, in order to ensure coordination and coherence.

## **Party Organization Structure**

NATIONAL CONGRESS

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

PROVINCIAL COMMITTEES

DISTRICT COMMITTEES

LOCAL COMMITTEES

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS

## **Political Party Development**

In order for political parties to be effective in their interaction with their constituents and each other, they must first identify their own strengths and deficiencies. For many parties, especially those in transitional democracies, participation in the election process may bring with it as many challenges as it does opportunities. While an election undoubtedly focuses a party in terms of its overall goal of attaining power in government, the development of the party's internal capacity and its ability to maximize its potential is an ongoing process that must evolve over a longer period of time. Even parties with highly developed internal structures may have to recognize that the climate in which they operate has changed dramatically, for instance, they may find themselves in opposition after years of unchallenged government and have to operate in a new political environment where the party history is in itself a liability. Such a change in the status quo throws up new challenges for all parties involved.

The core elements of political party development are applicable to all parties in all situations.

The core elements of political party development are applicable to all parties in all situations. How these elements are adopted varies and in order for a party to be successful in achieving its objectives, it needs to address such issues as internal democracy and party structures, candidate identification and recruitment, message development and communication.

A party must seek to bring its message to the widest possible audience. To do so, it involves opening its doors to other interest groups and bringing in new blood who are prepared not only to agree with its philosophy but also to espouse it in a proactive way.

For example, parties may have loosely defined core principles that distinguish them from their competitors but in order to be successful they must be able to translate these principles into concrete policies that will appeal to the electorate. The ability to put across its message in a way that is meaningful and to have that very message articulated by candidates who will be perceived as being credible and as having the ability to bring the party's policies to fruition is of vital importance in

the development of a positive party image. A party must also seek to bring its message to the widest possible audience. To do so, it involves opening its doors to other interest groups and bringing in new members who will be prepared not only to buy into its philosophy but also to espouse it in a proactive way. A party that exhibits a high level of internal organization and efficiency will also find it easier to convince the electorate of its potential to govern effectively.

In the last 20 years, NDI has worked with democratic parties from across the political spectrum in more than 60 countries around the world.

Based on the expressed needs of the political parties, the stage of political transition and cultural conditions in a particular country, democratic political activists are provided with the skills they require to establish representative, accountable, transparent and effective political parties. Political party development activities can be pursued in conjunction with other civil society, governance and election-related activities. Ultimately, the goal of all efforts is to support the development of effective institutions and processes that contribute to a healthy and strong democracy.

Information and technical assistance is provided to new and newly democratic political parties and movements on an inclusive, multiparty basis. The purpose of such programs is to deepen and expand democratic values and practices in transition societies by enabling political parties to play their special role and fulfill their responsibilities in a professional, transparent and peaceful manner consistent with international standards and the laws of their respective societies.

### **Selecting Political Parties for Assistance**

In developing a political party program the situation will vary from country to country and region to region but it should be a core principle to work with all political parties considered viable, representative, democratic and committed to peaceful political processes. It is not always practical or desirable to work with every single party in a country, often because not every party will satisfy the criteria. In arriving at these judgments it is normal to consult widely with experts, analysts and practitioners both inside and outside the country in question. In making decisions about which political parties, movements, organizations or individuals to include in political development programs, the following criteria may be considered:

- prominence in politics
- likely long-term presence in politics
- base of popular support
- ability to articulate interests/needs
- democratic commitment
- acceptability of policy positions
- level of internal democracy
- level of political organization at the local level
- receptiveness to assistance
- ability to absorb assistance
- need of assistance
- adherence to non-violent principles

### **Principal Training Techniques Used in Political Party Building**

Over many years, a range of techniques has been developed to engage political parties in development programs. Working primarily on the premise that situations are different from country to country and that political development and the democratization process in general will be influenced by cultural considerations and historical events, a common model should not be offered. Drawing on a large pool of international practitioners, party leaders, organizers and decision-makers can be exposed to a series of comparative examples from different democracies around the world. In the early years this involved organizing a series of workshops or seminars where experienced political practitioners would share their experiences and advise on their perspectives of the best practices to achieve the desired results.

In recent years, the opening of field offices staffed with political party experts has further strengthened the party development programs and allowed for ongoing consultations and follow-up activities between the seminars and workshops.

**Principal Techniques Used in Political Party Building Programs**

- Multiparty seminars and single party seminars
- Directed projects and special projects
- Consultations with Party HQ
- Party working groups
- One to one consultations/advisory
- Second country study missions
- Development of training manuals
- Facilitation of internal party discussion
- Assistance with developing international links
- Public fora and information meetings
- Opinion polls and research
- Informal dialogue
- Training of trainers within parties

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## **Spheres of Political Party Development**

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Broadly speaking, there are three main spheres of political party development in which technical advice and assistance is offered – operational and structural development, election campaign techniques and political parties in parliament. These activities contribute to the effectiveness of a political party and are complementary of each other. Very often parties require assistance under all of these headings. Depending on the situation – proximity of an election or a change in political environment allowing more freedom for political parties to operate – an appropriate program should be tailored, in consultation with party leaders.

Parties the world over are galvanized into action by an election – it inevitably consumes the energies of the leadership and membership alike. It is the time when members are most energized, when they are most sensitive to suggestions and, unfortunately, most defensive about their behaviour. While a properly structured and effectively organized political party will make a much better impact in an election campaign and achieve greater success, it has often proved difficult to have parties pay much attention to organizational development when there is an election on the horizon. In these situations, it is normal to offer advice and assistance in the area of election campaign techniques with a view to addressing the more fundamental organizational issues once the election has taken place.

### **Operational and Structural Development**

The operational and structural development of political parties is by far the most important area of programming and is crucial to the underpinning of the democratic process in transition societies. While a party's ability to wage an effective election campaign will often address the immediate concerns of the leadership and members, the capacity to organize and grow outside of the election cycle serves to create a healthy and competitive multiparty system long after program activities have ceased.

Internal party democracy goes to the core of a healthy and vibrant political party. The objective of democracy is to give people the right to choose. Through elections, they select and gain control over their political leaders. Just as citizens of a nation are entitled to cast ballots in elections, so the members of a political party should be entitled to select and to reject their leaders, office-holders, and candidates for public office. While the need for internal democracy is almost universally accepted (in principle), the structure of a party's decision making process is not always conducive to it. (Please see Appendix I for sample agendas from NDI programs in Indonesia, Zambia, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.)



**Issues to Address in Operational and Structural Development:**

- |   |  |   |  |
|---|--|---|--|
| C | Membership development and recruitment             | C | Creating an effective headquarters operation |
| C | Utilization of a volunteer membership              | C | Database construction                        |
| C | Message development                                | C | Organization of party congress or events     |
| C | Communications, internally and with the electorate | C | Issue and policy research                    |
| C | Media relations                                    | C | Opinion polling                              |
| C | National, regional and local party structures      | C | Fundraising                                  |
| C | Broadening the party base                          | C | Building relationships with interest groups  |

**Election Campaign Techniques**

Election-related political party programs address all of the activities necessary to structure and conduct an effective election campaign. The energy and activism of election season allows for greater longer-term party development by channeling the energy into building sustainable structures and processes in the party.

**Effective Election Campaign Activities:**

- |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| C | Strategic planning and developing an effective campaign           | C | Media relations                                     |
| C | Building a campaign management team and allocating responsibility | C | Candidate identification, recruitment and selection |
| C | Motivating and mobilizing the party membership                    | C | Campaign funding and budgeting                      |
| C | Message/Platform development                                      | C | Getting out the vote                                |
| C | Communication with the electorate and voter outreach              | C | Pollwatching  |
| C | Polling   |   |   |

**Post-election Assessment:**

A series of “lessons learned” meetings with parties immediately post election is extremely valuable. For both winners and losers, there is considerable merit in a post election meeting to consider the new circumstances and the ways, if any, in which training can continue to be of benefit. It is important to react quickly post elections as the new status quo can very quickly become entrenched. There is a short window of opportunity to become involved in shaping the new reality. Obviously, the mood and agenda will be fundamentally different depending upon whether the outcome was successful or unsuccessful. The worst scenario is a party that has or is about to lose its leadership and a substantial part of its electoral base, and which may therefore be facing the prospect of extinction. Learning to live with a bad election result, accept the consequences and beginning the process of rebuilding is an important maturing experience for any political party.

NDI has conducted a number of such meetings, e.g. Poland, Ukraine and Macedonia, and in the case of Poland an interesting added impact occurred. The Polish program was being conducted in certain regions but not all. In the course of the discussion, the NDI-partner regions used literature and election results data to show the effect of the training on their regional campaigns and the better results attained in comparison to other regions. This “show and tell” helped convince other branches to adopt the techniques.

**Parties in Parliament**

Very often, a party's preoccupation with building its organization or fighting an election campaign causes it to overlook the crucial issue of the party's ability to perform in parliament. While distinctly different to general governance programs, this area of programming is complementary to the important work of developing legislative capacity. The public perception and profile of a party is greatly influenced by the performance of the party caucus or parliamentary group and individual members of parliament. Political strategies adopted by parties in government and opposition usually have more of an impact on the electorate than many other activities parties engage in outside of an election. A party can generate a favorable impression with the electorate through an effective and credible performance in parliament. A credible record of representing the interests of the electorate in a consistent manner in parliament through promoting certain policy initiatives in government or opposition and giving innovative and unified leadership is a strong selling point for a party at election time.

In new and transitional democracies, many parties have little experience in organizing their activities in parliament and many members of parliament are new to their role and seek advice in establishing and staffing an office and conducting constituent relations.

Programmatic activity with parties in parliament assists in the creation of a caucus structure that best suits the party and the parliamentary system. Linked closely, or often as a precursor, to governance programs (which address issues such as legislative-executive relations, oversight of the executive and effective committees), parties in parliament programs offer technical advice and assistance.

## Assisting Parties in Parliament

C	The role of parties in opposition and government	C	Party discipline and the role of a whip
C	The rights and responsibilities of government and opposition	C	Inter party relations and coalition building
C	The structure of a parliamentary group or caucus	C	Constituent relations
C	The decision making process within a caucus	C	Communications - caucus members, headquarters, party members and the electorate
C	Effective use of parliamentary debating Time	C	How best to utilize junior members – “backbenchers”
C	Policy and issue research	C	Building relationships with interest groups and civil society
C	Effective use of limited resources		

(Please see Appendix II for sample agendas from NDI programs in Morocco and

### **1998 Ukrainian Elections**

In 1998, for the first time in history, 50% of MPs were elected through party lists. For democratically-oriented parties, this brought new opportunities and challenges to the fold. Prior to the 1998 election, parliamentarians were elected by single mandate constituencies.

Therefore, after the election it became apparent that many parties were losing their faction members who, through a result of being elected through the lists, switched to other groups because of financial reasons. This, in turn, brought up concerns within parties to develop a method to improve and strengthen their factions in the Parliament. NDI conducted a number of consultations on the structure on factions and the role of whips by introducing them to different experiences from other parliaments around the world. Faction discipline was one of the main focuses during a study mission to Poland and Russia taken by MPs in 1999-2000. As a result of this work, NDI partners in the Parliament introduced amendments to the Election Law, Law on the Status of MP and the Constitution in 2001, requiring MPs elected through party lists to stay in their party faction. These legal initiatives were approved by the Constitutional Court and voted on by parliament.

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## **Starting Point: Criteria for Selecting Parties and Baseline Assessment**

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### **Criteria for Selecting Political Parties**

In choosing political parties suitable for assistance, there is a need to assess the socio-political environment in the country and to identify all democratic, nonviolent and viable political parties. An organization fundamentally committed to the principles of democracy and in particular non-violence, gender equality, tolerance and diversity and multi-ethnicity should work with parties that espouse substantially the same values. After careful consideration, these parties should also have a significant number of members who are capable of transforming the party concerned into one that meets these criteria. It is not always practical or desirable to work with all parties in a country, often because not every party will satisfy the criteria. In arriving at these judgments it is normal to consult widely with experts, analysts, practitioners, diplomats and funding organizations both inside and outside the country in question.

**Beginning with an inclusive approach, it is usual to narrow the targets based on a set of standards established on a case-by-case basis and reflective of political realities and resources:**

- Is the party legally registered or authorized to engage in electoral and political processes, according to the laws and traditions of the society?
- Does the party appear to be sufficiently representative or popular or otherwise important to warrant inclusion in programs?
- Is the party formally and unequivocally, committed to fundamental democratic values, institutions and processes?
- Is the party organized (e.g. its leaders or candidates chosen) according to a process that has been validated democratically by the membership of the party?
- Does the party, or persons associated with it, have a history of engaging in (or condoning) violence as a means of pursuing ostensibly political goals?
- In cases where a party or individuals prominently identified with it have a history of involvement in undemocratic political activity, or violence, has the responsible leadership credibly and effectively renounced that history and committed itself to participate in, and respect the outcomes of, peaceable democratic competition?

In each case, a determination should be made on the basis of an overall assessment of these and other considerations, such as how the participation of a particular organization, group, movement or party could contribute to or detract from the overall goal of a strong party system and democracy.

In each country, the definition and application of the criteria will vary greatly. On the one hand, it may be that all 160 parties legally registered in a country need assistance in basic organizing, communication and planning skills; however, the existence of a few parties that possess a commitment to democracy and relatively more viability than the other parties may qualify them as targets for assistance. Targeting assistance to parties in Indonesia during its transition falls under this category.

On the other hand, one political party in another country may possess superior organizing skills and, for that very reason, not be the appropriate target for assistance, which targets the most nascent political parties. In establishing the criteria the broad goal of supporting a competitive, multiparty system needs to be kept in mind. Even when parties manifestly fail to meet certain fundamental criteria, there is often value in developing a relationship with them that might be informal and might expressly exclude formal assistance of any nature.

### **Purpose and Process of Baseline Assessments**

A baseline assessment helps provide a programmatic starting point by identifying the needs of parties. Once needs are determined, it is possible to tailor program approaches and activities. When conducted in a collaborative manner, the assessment is an opportunity to build constructive relationships with the parties concerned. In other words, the party is involved in discussing what it needs and does not need. The process can help all concerned develop a mutual understanding of where the party is at developmentally, and where it wants to go.

To achieve a mutual understanding, it is not possible to rely solely on an assessment questionnaire. Instead, assessment needs to be conducted in a participatory manner involving party leaders and activists from different levels of the party organization. Interviews with people outside the party – journalists, academics, civic leaders, businesspeople and labor leaders – should be conducted to provide a well-rounded perspective of the parties. Ideally, the process becomes that of a self-assessment by the party, where leaders and activists reflect on their situation and needs. The assessment process may include one-on-one meetings and focus group discussions over a period of time. When done systematically and purposefully, the result can be honest appraisal of a party's situation and needs.

**Recognizing the complexities of political organization in transitional societies, one should operate on the basis of a flexible approach that can adapt to diverse and dynamic situations. Moreover, decisions taken are reconsidered as political events warrant. Accordingly, additional, more nuanced criteria may also be considered, including the following:**

- If a political party does not qualify for participation in a program, are there individuals associated with the party who should nevertheless be included in programs in their individual capacity?
- If a political party does qualify for participation in a program, are there individuals or factions within the party who should not be included?
- Is it appropriate to focus program work primarily or exclusively on new political parties in an effort to promote equitable competition and a more genuinely competitive multiparty system?

Baseline assessments also provide benchmarks by which party development assistance can be measured. The assessment documents the conditions that existed at the launch of the program and can help identify appropriate indicators to the success of the program.

The NDI guide to conducting political party baseline assessments (please see Appendix III) contains questions that are not meant to be followed in a rigid manner; they provide guidelines. The document is not normally given to political parties in order for them to answer the questions in writing, but used by assessors to organize interviews and meetings with party leaders and activists.

The resulting baseline report is an objective, fact-based analysis which can be used as an instrument to assist in arriving at a gut led conclusion, which can then be used as a strategic planning tool. It is also usual to broaden the consultations to include local opinion formers journalists, academics etc., to help verify assessments in order to ensure both a depth of understanding and an honest set of conclusions.

### **Making the Difficult Decisions**

In a small number of cases, considerably greater sophistication is required in order to make the correct decision on whether to work with a political party. For instance, one can now identify a point in time when the leadership of Sinn Féin in Northern Ireland began the process of converting its activists to non-violent politics. However, for much of the following decade the party continued to be a “banned” organization. Is it appropriate to exclude such parties during a transition period and how does one arrive at a decision one way or the other? How soon after the first cease-fire in 1994 (or the second cease-fire in 1997) might it have been appropriate to provide assistance, if ever? Is that renunciation of violence a turning point?

For example, in the aftermath of war in Bosnia, how might one choose with which parties to work? What, if any, special criteria might exist? Should parties be required to adhere to the Dayton Accords? In South Africa, should assistance have gone to the Pan African Congress (PAC) before they gave up the use of violence in 1994?

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## **Building Trust with Political Parties (including Memoranda of Understanding)**

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### **Methods for Building Trust with Political Parties**

Building and maintaining trust with political parties involves several factors. Relationship-building at initial stages of contact and throughout a program can make or break the success of a program. Establishing clear expectations on both sides helps avoid misunderstanding. Most importantly, demonstrating and proving that training and assistance is in the best interest of that party can be the best tool for continuing effective relationships.

First impressions are important – initial contacts with a political party can be vital to future relationships. Often, these contacts are made during assessment missions before a decision is made on what method of assistance is important in that particular country context. At that point, being clear on the purpose of the visit and what kinds of assistance are generally provided is crucial to future relationships. Additionally, including senior figures from one or two political parties from different countries in the assessment team can highlight the wide network of experts and multinational, multi partisan style of providing assistance. Once political party assistance is the goal of a program, the next steps in building a relationship involve the baseline assessment process. When baseline assessments are conducted in a collaborative manner, it provides an excellent opportunity to establish a constructive working rapport. Acknowledging that there is no uniform recipe for political party building and no ideal approach – rather than attempting to import a particular structure and modus operandi – is a most effective way to gain the trust and respect of party leaders. The method of offering comparative examples from different parts of the world is always well received and creates an openness and receptiveness in parties. These early discussions, and a genuine sense of partnership, provide a basis for jointly establishing goals of the program (and indicators of accomplishment) that make sense to the people we are trying to help.

#### **Catching Their Attention**

One way to demonstrate the value of assistance at the beginning of a program is to lead the participants in a **SWOT** analysis. By facilitating a discussion on the **S**trengths and **W**eaknesses of the party and then examining the **O**pportunities and **T**ools available to them to exploit these illustrates in a very immediate way the practical benefits of assistance and the expertise that can be offered.

Often, having a relationship with an individual party activist or core group of activists can build trust. These activists act as an advocate of the development program because of their understanding of what is being offered. On many occasions, key members of the party leadership have participated in programs in other countries, often as part of an election observation mission or a peer exchange of party experiences, also contributing to the cementing of relationships.

Another significant aspect of confidence building is understanding what the parties want and/or need. It is very important, therefore, to explore with the party their real, as opposed to assumed, needs. Demonstrating the utility of participating in training goes a long way and giving careful thought to the first activities undertaken in a program is vital.

Obviously, confidence building is based to a very large extent on competence, good sense and sound political judgment. For example, an initial confidence-building multi-party session can be valuable, but knowing when to move to more tailored bilateral assistance with individual parties is also important. Similarly, when organizing study missions overseas, the quality of the visit is crucially important. It should never be a junket or simple tourism and the participants should not be exposed to methodologies and/or technologies that are simply beyond their reach.

### **The Utility of Memoranda of Understanding**

A sensitively drafted and properly used Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is an exceptionally useful instrument for building and maintaining relationships with political parties. It is vitally important, however, that the MOU does not become a negative or constricting instrument with legalistic undertones.

The value of an MOU is that it secures a substantive commitment and shared understanding of what has been agreed between the parties and what are the obligations of each side. It should be viewed by each partner as a good will gesture, not as a legally enforceable document that will expose the party to sanctions. Therefore, the point at which an MOU is entered into requires consideration. It is most certainly not a document to be negotiated at the outset of the relationship. On the contrary, it is probable that the MOU is predicated on having already built a relationship such that confidence and credibility has been established and the partner party is anxious to further develop and deepen the relationship.

Thus, the MOU should never be presented as a “formality” or “technical requirement”. It is an opportunity to cement and then develop an already established relationship. The idea should be introduced verbally and discussed before a draft document is produced. While the MOU should be as explicit as reasonable, it should not be over-formalized. The language should

### **The Bosnia-Herzegovina MOU Story**

NDI began working with democratic BiH parties in early 1996, soon after the Dayton Accords and arrival of international peacekeeping forces. In 1997, NDI decided to reassess each political party, focus on fewer regions and refine its program to better tailor it to the needs of each party. One of the mechanisms NDI decided to use to help further build relationships and design specific training agendas with party buy-in were memoranda of understanding. After NDI chose the parties with which to pursue MOUs, the Institute used its already well-developed relationships to work closely with the parties to come up with MOUs that made sense and led to clearly defined activities. The process took place over a few months, with NDI beginning by explaining the purpose of an MOU and presenting a first draft MOU for discussion. The subsequent discussions not only led to a coherent roadmap with clearly defined expectations of both NDI and the party, but it also served to cement relationships and clarify the program's components and goals.

NDI-BiH has found the MOUs to be useful in focusing each political party on their needs, in maintaining realistic levels of expectations and in continuous program evaluation.

*Please see Appendix IV for an example MOU.*



be informal but very clear and should allow for flexibility and changes in the ongoing relationship. It will ideally be entered into at a stage where a significant number of individuals in the party concerned are well known and can be identified as the ideal contact/liaison persons.

While the first draft of the document should be provided to a party, it is important that the counter party has a role in shaping the final document and time should be invested in the negotiation of the final version. Publicizing the signing of an MOU must be entirely at the option of the party concerned. MOUs should be written documents and not oral agreements. It is needed as a written record that one side can use to gently prod the other.

There is no reason why an MOU should not be entered into with a regional or local division of a party, always bearing in mind possible conflicts with HQ. Indeed, MOUs at this level are probably highly desirable, and necessary in the case of a decentralized party organisation.

## **Principal Training Techniques Used in Political Party Building Programs**

### **Multiparty Seminars and Single Party Seminars:**

Seminars and workshops play a critical role in most political party programs. They form the foundation for other activities including more day-to-day interaction with the parties.

Seminars usually involve a gathering of key party activists at which a series of presentations are made on a range of topics. There are often a number of international practitioners present who share their experiences with the participants. It is important to compile an agenda in a way that allows participants to test information received. For this purpose, presentations should be followed by practical workshops that would allow trainees to work in small groups and apply new skills in practice.

The issue of when multiparty seminars are appropriate and when it is more effective to conduct them on a single party basis varies depending on the program and the political environment. It has been shown that a multiparty plenary session is a good confidence building measure where it is made clear to all parties what is on offer and where there is no special treatment for particular parties. However, once the more sensitive work begins it is more productive to work separately with individual or like minded parties who are comfortable working together. This allows the participants to be more open about their party's strengths and weaknesses. At the same time, multiparty seminars with particular participants can be an excellent tool for strengthening the coalition of those parties while improving its internal communications.

### **Directed and Special Projects:**

While participants benefit enormously from workshops and seminars, it is very useful to assist the parties in putting some of the actual techniques into practice. For example, giving a demonstration on how to conduct a "door to door" campaign and then organizing a pilot campaign gives the party members the "hands on" experience necessary to convince them of the potential results for the party.

Similarly, if the area of strategic planning has been covered at a seminar, parties are encouraged to work on their own to develop a draft plan, which can then form the basis of follow up activity.

Special projects are often chosen to create a focus for a party or the participants in a program. It could be a small project such as organizing a town meeting or a much more ambitious project such as a youth rally or music festival.

In all of these activities there is a constant advisory and "hand holding" role to be played.

### **Consultations with Headquarters:**

During the early stages of a party program, intensive and detailed consultations with senior officials at party headquarters, including general secretaries, directors of organization and communications and other party strategists, can be quite useful. As well as building relationships, it allows for a greater understanding of the problems facing the party and its capacity and willingness to address them.

In more established programs or where the development work is taking place at regional or local levels, regular consultations at headquarters level leads to greater communication and a more interactive program overall. There are also opportunities during these consultations to evaluate the impact of a program and make adjustments as necessary.

On some occasions it is often through consultations with officials at party headquarters that modest programs are carried out. Strategic advice can be given to a small group of key personnel who in turn can take action at other levels in the party.

### **Working/Advisory Groups:**

The establishment of a working group or advisory group at a senior level by each of the parties participating in a program often gives added impetus to the work on hand. It can act as a bridge between the party leadership, the institute and the grass-roots membership. It can also give more weight to the program and ensure that it is more geared towards the actual requirements of the party as well as showing the party members that the work has the full support of the party leadership.

In some situations, it has been found useful to establish an all party working group to offer advice on the overall direction of the program and act as a liaison with their respective parties. This group can only address the broad themes of the program, leaving the actual party specific activity be dealt with by the individual parties.

### **One to One Consultations/Advisory Sessions:**

During the ongoing program activity, including workshops/seminars, opportunities often arise for one to one consultations. These are often with individual senior officials who have some responsibility for the development of their party. These consultations are invaluable in building strong relationships but also in ensuring that some guidance is being given in their work. Some consultations will also often involve individuals or parties not currently participating in a program and these too serve many useful purposes.

### **Informal Dialogue:**

It is also useful to develop a wide range of contacts inside and outside of political parties during the course of a program. By engaging in an informal dialogue with political actors and the wider community, there is a much greater understanding of the political situation and the views of the main players. It is often difficult to elicit these views in more formal settings.

Informal discussions also often take place with senior party leaders in situations where it may not be appropriate for them to attend formal training sessions or where perhaps, in the early

stages, they may not wish it to be widely known within the party that they are receiving training.

### **Training of Trainers Within Parties:**

With the emergence of political party assistance programs over the years, there has also been a growing recognition of the need to ensure that after a program has finished its course, the techniques and skills it has developed should be further utilized and new initiatives created and enacted to build on progress already made. In larger countries, it has been recognized that, in order to reach the widest possible audience within the political party system, it is necessary to recruit and involve party members themselves in training colleagues.

The training of trainers' technique allows for the training of key party members who then become trainers within their own party. This allows for greater involvement by regional units of the party and branches. A core group of party members trained and motivated can be most effective in transferring skills to the wider membership of the party in a relatively short period of time.

### **Development of Training Manuals and Handbooks:**

While some generic manuals and handbooks are in continuous circulation, there are many occasions when some country-specific or indeed, party-specific materials are prepared. Political parties themselves very often wish to develop their own training and instruction materials and seek advice from outsiders in the process. These locally produced manuals can be very effective in dispersing information and instructions to the widest possible audience within the party.

### **Facilitation of Internal Discussion:**

One of the areas of greatest need in the overall development of a political party is internal democracy. Internal democracy relates not just to the election of members at different levels in the party but also to the entire decision making process and giving a greater say to grass root members. This process can be long and drawn out and it may be difficult for members to rise with the leadership. On occasions where opportunities are created to facilitate an internal discussion and also share the experiences of other parties in similar circumstances, the initial steps necessary to address the party's difficulties may come just a little more easily.

### **Comparative Studies/Examples:**

One of the most effective and sensitive methods of informing and educating party leaders and members is by offering a range of comparative studies and examples. It is almost universally accepted that there is no definitive "right" way to organize a political party. There are many issues which influence the operation of a political party and over the years a wide range of approaches have been developed by party leaders. Being in a position to expose party activists to the varied methods of organizing raises their comfort level by allowing them to choose from the various examples to create a model most suitable for their particular situation. One effective method to convey examples is taking party activists to another country to learn skills first hand.

## **The Study Mission Experience – Macedonian and Croatian Party Activists to Northern Ireland**

In 1998, a group of ten Macedonians from five main political parties and a group of seven Croatian political party representatives took part in an NDI Study Mission to Dublin and Belfast to participate in the historic Assembly elections in Northern Ireland. The program sought to achieve the following objectives: increase the participants' knowledge of conducting a democratic election campaign in a divided society; expose the participants to the mechanics of a proportional representation electoral system; witness the implementation of democratic elections as a result of negotiation between two factions and increase the campaign skills of participants in areas such as voter contact, media relations, party organization, and "get out the vote" techniques.

The program had two main components. The first component comprised an orientation and briefing in Dublin with the main political players, including political parties, academics, journalists, and community leaders to provide an Irish perspective of the situation in Northern Ireland. The second component of the study mission involved exposing the participants to the workings of election campaigns in Belfast. Participants were assigned to various parties to act as volunteer campaign workers. In these roles, the participants actually took part in campaign activities, such as door-to-door canvassing. As noted by many of the participants, this was an experience that made a significant impact upon them.

While in Belfast, the participants resided in the same hotel so that they could share their experiences with each other at the end of each campaign day.

The NDI representative facilitated discussions about their experiences and explained anything they did not understand. During the program, members of the two groups admitted that at first they had little faith in door-to-door canvassing and believed it would not work in Macedonia or Croatia, but now they saw the benefits of it and agreed it could work in their respective countries.

NDI required that the Macedonians and Croats send an equal number of males and females to Ireland. Ironically, the Irish remarked upon the gender balance and asked for advice on how to attract more women into politics.

Perhaps the best evaluation comes from seeing how the participants have applied their experience since their return to Macedonia and Croatia. For instance, the Macedonians have been organizing training activities for other party activists, designing leaflets, briefing candidates, and generally passing on everything they learned. The Croat participants thought that the most important benefits of the trip were from learning about and actually performing the door-to-door method of direct communication with voters.

Another important result of the Study Mission was that the participants successfully worked as a team. They did not represent their ethnic group or their political party, but their country. At the counting of votes in Northern Ireland, they saw how opposition party activists and candidates worked together and got along well on a personal level.

### **Public Fora and Information Meetings:**

There are a range of activities under this heading from those surrounding an election such as candidate fora and town meetings organized by the parties to other types of town meetings outside of the election cycle where public opinion is tested on issues of concern. Political parties are trained in ways to develop interaction with the public while crafting their message and subsequently disseminating it.

### **Opinion Polls and Research:**

Opinion polls are a necessary tool of a political party. It is important to a party developing a platform or message to have some information on the public's issues of main concern. In an election cycle, it is useful to have some indication of the strength of each of the political parties at different stages of the campaign. There are two main training elements in the area of polling and research – the skills necessary to compile a questionnaire, select a vote sample and train interviewers and, of equal importance, the ability to interpret polling data and results and take the necessary action.

Polling and research is usually very attractive to party leaders, but it can sometimes be a distraction when other more important activities should be receiving attention. Opinion polls are no substitute for the more tedious activities such as door to door campaigning or other community interaction. Polling and research is not encouraged in the early stages of development as a political party requires a lot of resources to be in a position to undertake such activity. Polls badly carried out because of poor methodology or improperly processed data are very damaging to a party at a critical time in their development.

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**Focus:  
Local, Regional and National  
Levels**

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A number of considerations arise in deciding whether programming should be conducted in a particular locality or region and/or at the national level. Deciding to work *only* at the national headquarters level should never, save in the most *extreme* cases, be considered an option. In most emerging democracies the size of the headquarters operation is quite modest and many parties depend to a large extent on a volunteer membership. Training that is confined to the party nationally is not as effective in the real terms as bringing the message to a wider audience in the regions. Often a “training of trainers” program where party members are selected and trained to conduct their own training programs within the party at every level has been proved to be an efficient way to make a significant impact where either time or resources are at a premium.

The inherent value of building a party from the bottom up should not be overlooked. In many countries, there are instances where local trainees worked their way up the chain of command to paid positions in party headquarters. Working out how to operate with different levels is a matter for consultation with the parties, but it should be borne in mind that party leaders often have a completely erroneous conception of where training can add value. They may be reluctant to allow resources in the form of training out of their direct control. Maintaining clear lines of communication and expectations can alleviate territorial issues. In discussions of this kind with party leaderships, it should be understood that trained people can appear to be a threat to the party leadership. Discretion and care must always be exercised to ensure that resources are not being misdirected, perhaps at the behest of party leaderships. There should, however, be regular contact with party headquarters, keeping them informed of what is happening. In addition, the party leadership will often want to attack

**The Poland Experience:**

When NDI began designing its political party program in Poland in 1996, the team met with political party leaders and parliamentary players in Warsaw, regional activists and people from outside the political arena. It quickly became clear that power-brokering and internal fighting prevented party headquarters leaders from being viable candidates for training. Activists at the regional and local level, however, were willing to work hard and use the NDI training to help build up their party structure locally.

NDI identified the cities with which to work and was able to find viable political party activists through the identification process. NDI kept headquarters involved by holding periodic meetings to keep them informed. NDI made all the participants complete difficult training exercises and homework, which generally had the effect of narrowing the participants to those who really would use the training.

Headquarters remained happy because results were appearing in the selected regions – fundraising increased, media relations improved and ultimately elections results improved. The decision to train local activists has been the major reason for program success in Poland – the network better enabled NDI to conduct further trainings, it helped when NDI-Poland shifted to a focus on women and youth leadership, and many of those local activists are now working in party headquarters.

weaknesses rather than build on strengths. For example, if a large dynamic volunteer membership is one of the main strengths of party and policy formulation the greatest weakness, it is often more productive to begin by working with the leadership on harnessing and focussing the efforts of the members before seeking to address the area of policy formulation though the tendency of the leadership may be the opposite.

Every country and political party situation is different. There is no uniform set of guidelines to decide where training should be concentrated. The sense and judgement of individuals are important to finding the right mix of activities on the national, regional and local levels. Some other points to consider are potential logistical difficulties, available funding (regional and local programming on a large scale tends to be more expensive), level of party activist interest at each level, opportunities for working on building strengths rather than weaknesses and the level of sophistication and competence on the various levels. Obviously working with regional branches of a party on issues such as strategic planning or membership development is of little benefit if the party centrally do not have the capacity to coordinate this activity. In these types of situations it is often necessary and advisable to conduct some training and programming at national level before directing attention to the regions. On the other hand, where party leadership may seem indifferent to what is on offer, appear cynical of its worth or be incapable of having the assistance percolate down to other levels moving the focus to the lower tiers of the organization has proved very successful. Generally speaking, the merit of using a bottom up approach outweighs the difficulties, but party leadership need to buy into the concepts and give other units of the party the necessary encouragement and support.

The balance of political party assistance among the national, regional and local level should be continually re-evaluated.



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## **Broaden the Base: Women and Youth**

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The inclusion of all citizens into the affairs of their country is vital to the success of democracy. The provision of equal opportunity to women and young people is consistently low around the world. It is important to convey the importance of women and youth participation to political parties, not only for its inherent democratic value but for the electoral advantages it can offer and for the assistance it provides in helping parties modernize.

### **Women**

Political parties and their leaders need to understand the importance of the inclusion of women into the party politic. Increased women's participation often results in electoral advantages and it is inherently proper to fully integrate women. Working on this requires particular emphasis on where the barriers lie for women wishing to enter politics, even as political activists. The need to be sensitive to cultural barriers is important. Too actively promoting women's involvement in politics could be seen as undermining the prevailing social culture.

Generally, specific times should be set apart for women's training. Training groups should provide a place where women feel safe and feel comfortable about getting involved. Multiparty forums are often less than comfortable for women. At the same time, gender balanced composition of seminars participants can be used as a mean for encouraging parties to involve more women. "Demography of the party team should reflect the demography of voters targeted" can be a crucial argument for some party leaders.

It should be noted that the gender composition of a training team needs to be carefully considered. As a rule, women trainers should be actively sought – particularly for countries where the promotion of women is a priority. Concerns over cultural sensitivities should be balanced with the overriding necessity to confront the fear which exists among men in many societies of the advancement of women in politics. Efforts must also be made to counteract the perception in many societies that it is inappropriate or unseemly for a woman to be involved in politics.

A simple and practical way of overcoming these barriers is to get groups results oriented (e.g., focused on the benefits to their party), rather than approaching the problem from an ideological standpoint. By focusing on practical targets, and getting agreement on the desired outcomes, the role and participation of women will often follow naturally.

## **The Poland Experience**

In November 1996, NDI launched the Women's Project component of its political party development program. The objectives of the Women's Project were to boost women's participation in a society where women are under-represented and mistrusted in politics; develop women's political skills; and, increase parties' understanding of the importance of targeting women voters.

The first step in ensuring the success of the Women's Project entailed better understanding the overall political climate in Poland, as well as attitudes toward women's role in politics.

Once NDI resident staff identified the pitfalls and took them into consideration for the planning of women's program activities, resident staff were able to work toward changing preconceived notions on women's political participation. Being aware of the highly political nature of women's issues enabled NDI to create effective training programs. The training helped both men and women build more democratic mechanisms within their parties.

To kick-off the Women's Project, NDI organized multi-partisan conferences in Torun and Krakow, through which it publicized its in-country plans, and began to convince Polish parties of the importance of targeting women. At the conferences, trainers emphasized that targeting women could be a self-interested election strategy, that parties could win more seats if they secured the women's vote. Trainers also repeatedly underscored the basic message that parties strengthen themselves significantly by becoming more receptive to issues and policies attractive to women voters.

NDI's approach to these issues resonated with participants, who later exhibited enthusiasm in post-conference questionnaires. NDI's resident representative and staff then designed training programs that helped women within existing party structures.

Building on the momentum generated by the conferences, NDI held a women's training "road show" in March 1997. NDI trainers focused on effective message development, speech-making, press relations, and radio and television skills-building. Consultations provided valuable, practical skills to women who eventually ran as candidates in the two rounds of local elections that followed.

In July 1997, NDI conducted its largest training for women candidates in Poland. Participating in the training was a close, equitable representation of women from across the country and ideological spectrum. The training addressed topics such as how to target women voters and how to maximize voter contact through door-to-door canvassing. Some creative activities included running mock press conferences and critiquing one another's appearances on television; holding open-ended discussions with journalists about the type of information they wish to extract from politicians, and vice versa; and how to write and deliver public speeches.

Lastly, NDI held a three-day conference at the end of February 1998. Participating in the conference were forty-five women who had not previously worked with NDI, yet intended to run as candidates in the October 1998 elections. NDI trained these potential women candidates on topics ranging from media training to the role of a local councilor.

## **Women Political Leadership in Kenya**

In 1993, NDI began conducting a program in Kenya to develop women candidates' knowledge and skills relating to leadership, campaign planning and electoral processes in order to increase the number and capacity of women running for office and being elected at the local and national levels. Before the program began, Kenyan women were excluded, for the most part, from the democratization process in Kenya even though they represented over half the voting population. The women were also under-represented in formal political institutions, with only 3.2% of women serving in parliament. The program sought to achieve the following objectives: promoting leadership development; increasing the number of women running for office; promoting cross-party solidarity among women; helping to change public attitudes; producing and distributing training materials; developing relationships with local groups; and having a positive effect on the skills and capabilities of individual program participants.

The program, divided into three main phases, began with NDI working side by side with Education Centre for Women in Democracy (ECWD) by hosting three seminars together promoting women's participation across party lines.

The second phase dealt with strengthening and increasing the knowledge and skills of women candidates and political party activists to enhance their participation in politics. Five seminars were held, with representatives from other African countries as well as international experts, who provided participants with comparative examples of strategies for women's political participation in diverse electoral systems. The third phase of the program extended into grassroots organizations as well. NDI tried to expand its outreach efforts to develop broad-based support for women candidates. Seminars took place throughout much of 1996 and into the election year of 1997. The agenda of each seminar was determined by the needs of the region. Some of the topics were: social construction of gender and its effect on women's political participation; explaining the electoral and nomination process in Kenya; and leadership development.

At the national level, one seminar for women candidates and two training for trainers (ToT) workshops for campaign staff were organized. Initially, the ToT were set-up primarily for the staff and volunteer teams of women candidates to train them on how to become professional campaign managers. What came of it, though not initially planned, was a young women's seminar on political participation.

In 1997, election year in Kenya, seminars addressed the topic of political party nominations. NDI held two national seminars and helped organize 12 grassroots seminars as well. NDI also produced and distributed campaign related manuals and voter education booklets and met with a number of political parties to encourage their commitment to nominating a certain number of women candidates.

The final year of the program brought together women candidates who participated in the December 1997 elections. Three seminars were held, which included both successful and unsuccessful women candidates, who reflected on their campaign experience.

At the end of the NDI program in 1998 over 4000 women had participated in the training workshops. One of the participants was a serious candidate in the presidential election and a number of new groups such as the Friends of Esther and Deborah (FREDA) emerged to continue the efforts to create greater women's participation. Many of the participants continue to be active leaders in promoting key legislative initiatives of critical importance to women.

### **Interesting Statistics**

- **415 women declared their candidacy in 1997 vs. 182 in 1992**
- **189 women were nominated by their parties in 1997 vs. 149 in 1992**
- **87 women were elected to office in 1997 vs. 51 in 1992**

## Youth

In a few regions and countries, political parties suffer from the public's lack of confidence, sometimes deserved. As political parties form a cornerstone of democratic society, this presents a problem that is difficult to address. One way to address the problem is to work with a new generation of young party activists on skills and techniques designed to create confidence in political parties from the electorate. In other cases, political parties have largely failed to address citizens' concerns, which is often exacerbated by political leadership unwilling to fully engage their constituents. Overall, getting youth involved in the political life of their countries is vital for the future prospects of democracy.

Working with youth party activists can be a way to work from the grassroots upward to affect change in political parties. Young political party activists can also present the best opportunity to galvanize the parties' outreach to the electorate. They often have fresh ideas and enthusiasm, but they have not been afforded growth opportunities by party hierarchies.

In providing assistance to youth, working at local level is a practical way of gaining access. Youth tend to respond well to hands-on training and often can design and implement projects that gain the notice of party leadership, thus having the two-fold benefit of improving the party itself and opening leadership to new ideas.

NDI has been working in Albania since 1991 providing technical assistance to both civic and political organizations, and launched its Political Leadership Development (PLD) Program in 1999.

The objective of the PLD Program was to build on the existing skills and knowledge of emerging leaders in Albania by providing young party members with training and technical advice. This was achieved primarily through a series of five multi-party seminars. Additionally, each program participant was expected to enter the program with a proposal for a concrete project aimed at strengthening his or her own party. This project proposal was refined over the course of the PLD program and implemented by the participant. This action-oriented approach was an integral part of the PLD Program, and provided opportunities for practical application of new skills. At the outset of the training seminars, participants were asked to commit themselves to sharing lessons learned in the program with their party colleagues. NDI provided the participants with tips on training techniques to facilitate that process.

The first training seminar focused on leadership, team-building and internal party communications, and took place in September of 1999. Subsequent training sessions were conducted approximately every two weeks through December 1999 and covered the following topics:

- Negotiation Skills: the Politics of Compromise
- The Role of Parties in Parliament and in Local Government
- Media Relations
- Public Communications and Voter Outreach

NDI recruited program candidates through a rigorous and competitive application process. Application forms were distributed to political parties, NGOs and members of the

international community. Selection of program participants was based on the applicants' type and length of political experience, and responses to application and interview questions. NDI paid special attention to gender and regional balance in the selection of participants.

In Latin America, a program similar to the Albania leadership program has arisen. The same basic principles have been implemented as you can see by the following example:

#### **Youth Political Party Leadership Program in Latin America**

Creating open and accountable political parties that can effectively debate public policy issues remains a challenge in Latin America where citizens view parties as ineffective, corrupt, and out of touch with their constituencies. This loss of confidence in parties has led to the emergence of populist leaders who have threatened democratic institutions and processes. NDI has developed a long-term regional initiative, The Leadership Program, to foster relations among parties in the hemisphere, and promote political party reform and renewal.

NDI launched the Political Leadership Program in 1999, a regional program to strengthen the leadership skills and ability of emerging political leaders to promote the modernization and renewal of political parties. Following a rigorous selection process, each Political Leadership Program begins with an intensive, two-week leadership development seminar in Washington, D.C. and continues in-country with the young leaders implementing concrete party-building projects and exposing their colleagues to practical leadership techniques.

Going into its third year of existence, the Political Leadership Program has involved young political leaders who have been mayors, municipal councilors, legislators, legislative advisors, indigenous political activists and leaders of youth movements. Through the program, the participants have been exposed to party strengthening projects which help improve operations within their respective parties. Whether they worked on building consensus, revitalizing the party's organizational structure, promoting indigenous leadership, promoting youth participation, building party bridges or establishing candidate selection process, each participant was able to translate their experience in the program into their own party.

Drawing on Latin American, European and U.S. political party experts, NDI helped the young politicians develop leadership skills in areas such as negotiation, strategic planning, crisis management and communication to apply to their own party strengthening efforts. They also explored mechanisms to democratize parties and expand their outreach. Please see Appendix V for a seminar agenda.

To date, there have been over 2,250 participants, ranging in age from 25 to 35, who have taken part in the leadership program. In March of 2002, a new group of young, party leaders will take part in the program.

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## Internal Party Capacity and Sustainability

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Political party programs are undertaken with the explicit intention of developing a party's internal capacity.

Creating a sustainable culture of democratic politics, beyond the mere imparting of skills, is a vital goal. The long-term impact of party programming should consistently be considered. A key issue is selecting highly motivated people with which to work and offering as much continuous and progressive training to them as possible. While general political party programming always helps develop internal capacity, below are a few specific methods of building sustainability outright.

**Training of trainers** is a good model to build capacity. These programs can be focused on training of party trainers to develop training programs within a political party AND training of non-partisan trainers who can continue the work that has begun. Each method allows experience to be passed on to in-country trainers that can continue building capacity.

When training trainers, care must be taken to ensure that any such program is likely to lead to the desired result – i.e., that the beneficiaries of the training will use their skill within political parties in their own country rather than simply using the training to enhance their career prospects generally. It is critical to select the right people whose commitment to a political party and to working in democratic politics is beyond question.

**Training Institutes** established by individual parties are an excellent method of continuing to develop the internal capacity of a party. While some financial resources are required to initiate such a venture the guaranteed return on investment makes the effort worthwhile. A party which has obtained outside assistance in strengthening and developing its structures gains confidence in itself once it begins to develop its own training initiatives. It also ensures that long after the outside assistance has ended the party can continue to develop its existing and new membership.

### **Bosnia-Herzegovina RFC Training Program**

In late 1997, NDI recruited and selected six BiH political organizers. These organizers, also referred to as Regional Field Coordinators (RFCs), received training from NDI and in turn are training BiH political party activists. NDI's resident representatives used a train-the-trainers approach to increase local staff's ability to train others. RFCs received training on party organizing techniques, public speaking, moderating, and facilitation skills. In addition, the RFCs also received training on party pollwatching techniques in anticipation of the September 1998 elections.

The RFCs have not only co-trained in sessions run by NDI trainers for political parties, but have also begun to design and implement their own training programs. For example, the RFCs conducted training on party pollwatching for parties throughout BiH. The RFCs, in addition to mastering the substantive material and presenting it to parties, organized all aspects of the sessions from invitations to meeting space to sign-in lists. The RFC teams held training in several cities and distributed approximately 6,500 NDI Pollwatching Manuals across Republika Srpska and the Federation. RFCs in the Federation also conducted a train-the-trainers exercise with local branch party members on pollwatching, therefore broadening the impact of the training beyond just those individuals present at the sessions.

While most programs begin with training in the basic skills of organizing a political party, it is important that the training program move progressively towards more focused and strategic activities as soon as practicable. The training of trainer technique provides for the training of individual party members who will continue to address the basic training needs of the party whilst allowing the field representative to concentrate on other development areas.

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## **Measuring Results Program Assessment and**

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### **Purpose of Assessment**

Regular self-assessment – by both the implementing organization and the parties themselves – is a critical element of well-functioning and effective programs. By illuminating strengths and weaknesses, assessment activities help promote continual programmatic improvement. Essentially, assessment assists program planners and implementers with decision making. The assessment results help determine if the program is working, if it is still practical and pertinent, and if it merits future resources.

At the end of a program, political parties and/or party systems should be stronger as a direct result of program intervention. Therefore, it is necessary to determine exactly what changed to make the parties and/or party system stronger. An ongoing assessment process provides a record of program developments that can be used to illustrate actual impact. An assessment process needs to be in place from the program's outset. This requires program managers and implementers to design clear plans for how developments will be monitored and measured. It also requires careful consideration of how assessment results will be fed back into the program.

### **Building Ongoing Assessment into the Program**

Developing an ongoing assessment process starts as baseline information is gathered, needs are determined, and program objectives are defined. The objectives are the end points against which programs activities are assessed. Ideally, every activity moves a program closer to the stated objectives. The question then becomes: How will we know this is happening effectively?

For practical purposes, it is not reasonable to wait until the end of a program to determine if activities worked. An assessment process will allow the program's pulse to be taken regularly from start to finish. This requires asking constantly: What activities are working? Why? Why not? What changed as a result? The actual monitoring process can be as simple as observing the implementation of activities, talking with program participants, using evaluation forms for participants, conducting interviews with selected participants 1-6 months after the event, and collecting anecdotes for use in periodic reports.

For an assessment process to work, it is necessary to determine what assessment information is needed, how it will be gathered, who will gather it, when it will be gathered, and how it will be used.



### **Example from the Ukraine**

Since 1993, the NDI office in the Ukraine has been keeping track of all activists participating in political training sessions. Currently, this database stores over 3,500 people and is used primarily for post-program communication with trainees. The main communication tool used is the “Democrat” a bi-monthly newsletter that covers all aspects of NDI’s activities in the Ukraine including an overview of upcoming programs and handouts of relevant materials. It also provides current an outlet for feedback from participants on specific issues.

In the spring of 2001, together with “Democrat”, NDI trainees received a questionnaire devoted to the Institute’s program. Readers were asked to assess their progress related to the sessions they received from NDI as well as any feedback they could give on areas that needed improvement. A considerable number of the readers sent their responses back to the NDI office in Kyiv. The information was systemized and used for some reporting and planning activities for NDI in the Ukraine. Likewise, data taken from the survey was compiled into a paper “NDI as it is viewed by Ukrainians” that was enclosed in the July issue of the “Democrat”.

### **Suggestions for building an assessment process into a program include:**

- C Involve program partners – including participants – in the process of monitoring and measuring progress.
- C Make a commitment to an ongoing process of assessment and program improvement.
- C Start with clear, realistic, and measurable program objectives.
- C Be explicit about underlying assumptions and expectations.
- C Clarify expected outcomes with partners at the beginning. Party leaders and activists have to buy-into the program goals and objectives.
- C Define a programmatic beginning, middle and end, and define benchmarks that denote progress. (e.g., effective message development and delivery, creation of newsletter, development of membership lists, door-to-door campaign activity, recruitment of women members, coalition viability, candidates elected, campaign plan developed, etc.).
- C Based on the objectives, benchmarks and activities, determine the specific types of qualitative and quantitative information that need to be gathered. For example, if the objective is strengthening the party’s capacity to recruit new members, it may be necessary to monitor the number of new members, as well as analyze the quality of the membership recruitment process.
- C Create a system to analyze and distribute information.

### **Monitoring and Measuring Progress and Feeding Information Back Into the Program**

Assessment is easiest and most effective when designed as an integral day-to-day component of a program. Several methods can be used to monitor program developments regularly. Of course, the best mix of methods will depend on what needs to be monitored and measured.

### ***Select Monitoring Methods***

- Track the number of training sessions conducted, participants attending, consultations held, materials distributed, etc.
- Collect participants' testimonials using focus groups or informant interviews.
- Use and analyze evaluation forms filled in by participants for each seminar.
- Ask participants of each study mission or special program to prepare a report on lessons learned and plans on implementing the best ideas.
- Discuss the direction and usefulness of the program with party leadership.
- Discuss the program's impact with other local and international organizations.
- Systematically collect anecdotes about how participants are applying what they learn.
- Gather media reports related to program activities and results.
- Collect any materials (e.g., newsletters, citizen questionnaires, membership recruitment forms) created by the parties as a result of activities.

The information generated through the monitoring process should then be reviewed in light of objectives, benchmarks, activities, and underlying assumptions. The analysis and conclusion should then be disseminated through bi-weekly field reports and should also be used as a basis for periodic program development discussions.

When analyzing assessment information, be mindful of changes in the operating environment and program assumptions. Occasionally, external factors impinge upon a program's ability to function properly. This may require a rethinking of objectives and related activities. There is also the possibility that the underlying program assumption may change (e.g., the need to level the playing field may disappear if the ruling party fractionalizes), prompting consequent changes in the program approach.

### ***Assessing Training Activities***

Since most programs are built upon a series of training sessions, it is necessary to assess the effectiveness of all training activities. Formal evaluations should be administered at the end of training activities to determine if the participants actually learned anything and if they intend to use their new knowledge or skills. These evaluations may include questionnaires that gauge participants' *reaction* to the training and also activities that oblige participants to *demonstrate* what they learned (e.g., role plays, simulations, discussions, or actual practice). In some instances, participants will be given an assignment that he/she must submit to NDI 2-3 weeks later.

Ideally, staff members will not have to take total responsibility for assessing a program. Program partners and participants can be directly involved in program assessment and development. Through mechanisms, such as Memoranda of Understanding (MOU), the program implementers and its political party partners define specific developmental objectives and activities, and delineate implementation responsibilities. These types of mechanisms place ownership of the program in the hands of the party organizations and foster their commitment to learn and apply new practices. This participation and commitment should be carried over into the process of assessing what is and is not working programmatically.

One should work with partners to help them establish a system to assess themselves and their accomplishments periodically. For example the system could comprise occasional roundtable discussions with party leaders and primary program participants, followed by written reports of select accomplishments to be published in the party's newsletter. Any information generated during these assessment activities can then be fed back into the program and can also be used to measure impact.

## **Conclusion**

Since program assessment is not a science, there are many ways to go about it. Every program will require a slightly different approach. Be creative and flexible when designing an assessment process in the beginning. Over the course of the program, an effective assessment process will help promote improvement and will provide a step-by-step account of developments.

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## Appendices

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### **Appendix 1**

Workshop on Building Political Parties (Indonesia)  
Strengthening Political Party Organization in Zambia  
1999 Cycle One Training Elections as Party Building  
1999 Cycle One Training Member/Volunteer Recruitment  
1999 Cycle One Training Fund raising

### **Appendix 2**

Workshop: The Role of the Groupe Parlementaire in the Legislature  
The Party Caucus in Parliament (Ghana)

### **Appendix 3**

Conducting a Baseline Assessment of Political Parties

### **Appendix 4**

Sample of Memorandum of Understanding between NDI and New Croatian Initiative

### **Appendix 5**

Latin America and the Caribbean Political Leadership Program Inaugural Seminar  
Agenda