



# Civic Update

a newsletter of NDI citizen participation programs worldwide

Issue I

April 2001

Welcome to NDI's Civic Update newsletter. This first 2001 issue of the Update examines partnership approaches, drawn from NDI program initiatives in Nigeria, Namibia and Indonesia. Based on information and insights provided by NDI resident representatives, the country articles describe some lessons learned and best practices when working with local partners.

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## A Word on Partnerships

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The term "partnership" basically refers to relationships where NDI works collaboratively with a local group(s) to fulfill mutually agreed upon program objectives. At the same time, NDI attempts to transfer a variety of programmatic and organizational skills to local partners (this differentiates NDI from donors that simply provide financial assistance). It's often true that mutually respectful partnerships result when local organizations are involved with NDI in setting the priorities, making decisions about program design and implementation and take equal responsibility for the success of an initiative.

Partners need to be aware that NDI is about increasing citizen involvement in politics. Likewise, NDI staff members need to be respectful of the mission of a partner group. Groups should not feel pressured to redirect their organizational focus or to place

their reason for existing second to NDI's agenda. When groups redirect their focus to suit a donor-driven agenda, these groups often grow dependent and become less inclined to represent the interests and concerns of actual citizens. Ideally, groups should feel compelled to work with NDI because they acknowledge that NDI is willing and able to support *their* agenda. In the case of coalitions, for instance, NDI has been more successful when groups have begun to coalesce naturally and NDI then steps in to provide targeted assistance. In these situations, the political will already exists and NDI can help enhance its expression.

As the cases in this issue illustrate, it is essential that local partners are involved in program planning. If citizens and citizen groups are expected to conduct advocacy campaigns or other initiatives, it is important that they are involved in these decisions and understand the implications. The collective development of specific objectives and a description of what constitutes success need to be determined jointly. Ideally, work plans, or at least the germane portions, are developed with the participation of local partners. This participation helps NDI and the partner clarify expectations and responsibilities, helps to empower the partner and ensures that the program is responsive to local needs.

As part of this process, NDI should help partner groups assess their own

capacities and set some organizational developmental objectives, as well as the shorter term program objectives. For some organizations, this may mean a full-fledged strategic planning process to determine how the organization envisions the future, what role the organization wants to play in helping create that future, how advocacy or education fits into the organization's broader thinking and what skills, resources, and time the organization needs to fulfill its vision. Good luck in your present and future partnerships.

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## Small Steps in Namibia

### Equal Giant Strides for ♀ Advocates

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Since independence, Namibia has enjoyed general stability based on the rule of law and regular elections at national, regional and local levels. However, women's participation in the political process remains low. As part of NDI's efforts to foster the development of citizen advocacy and broaden the political participation of women, NDI has provided technical assistance to one of the country's best-known women's organizations, Sister Namibia, and the coalition, Namibian Women's Manifesto Network (WMN) since August 1999. The eight steps below describe the formation of the WMN and its subsequent activities from August

1999 until December 2000. The steps also illustrate a strategic process of change.

## **Create an Opening**

In a strategic move, Sister Namibia and her partners used the objectives stated in the Southern Africa Development Community's *Declaration on Gender and Development* in WMN's founding document. As a signatory, the Namibian government had previously endorsed the declaration, along with the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform for Action. This support on the government's part helped create an opening for a women's advocacy campaign.

## **Write a Manifesto**

Seizing upon the "national commitment", Sister Namibia and its partners fashioned the *Declaration on Gender and Development* into their own *Namibian Women's Manifesto*. Through an extensive process of consultation, (involving distribution of drafts to over 200 women activists and NGO representatives, political parties, parliament and all levels of government) they developed a manifesto that clearly outlined their demands and vision of the future. The final document presented a straightforward, comprehensive framework.

## **Create a Coalition**

From the beginning of the movement, the involvement of numerous groups and individuals in the development of the *Manifesto* served to educate and mobilize women throughout the country around gender issues. Initially, the coalition comprised participants from a Namibian workshop on "Women in Politics and Decisionmaking". At this event, participants agreed that Sister Namibia would lead NGOs, women's wings of political parties and other organizations in a

campaign to promote the participation of women in the 1999 general election and beyond. This group, along with those that joined in response to the release of the *Manifesto*, constituted a coalition of more than 30 civil society organizations and parties spread nationwide. The coalition then took on the name of Women's Manifesto Network.

## **Pick Your Time and Target**

The WMN kicked off its pre-election, advocacy campaign with the publication of the *Manifesto* in six indigenous languages and its distribution in all thirteen Namibian regions. In preparation, regional and local facilitators participated in a national training-of-trainers workshop to learn skills in media advocacy, organization of workshops, information dissemination and political mobilization. Upon returning home, they organized local workshops and launching events where they distributed the *Manifesto* to the public. This raised visibility and awareness to a national level and set the stage for influencing political parties and conducting voter education and citizen mobilization.

## **Build Understanding**

In addition to transferring skills necessary to organize workshops and public launches in their home regions, the training-of-trainers workshop assured that regional and local facilitators would be familiarized with the *Manifesto's* goals. Consequently, when this corps extended the campaign nationwide, there was consistency in their understanding and a shared resolve that rendered greater strength to the network.

## **Win Support and Neutralize**

WMN invited all political parties contesting the 1999 elections to the *Manifesto's* national launch. Representatives of three major parties attended and expressed unanimous support for the aims and

contents of the document. This served to largely neutralize opposition up-front.

## **Win Small, Win Early, Win Often**

Encouraged by extensive media coverage received during the elections, (*best practice*) and after an evaluation and assessment of their previous campaign, the WMN decided to organize a series of advocacy activities during the month of March around International Women's Day (March 8). The WMN organized "Gender Awareness Month" to raise consciousness at both regional and national levels and provide opportunities to lobby the Parliament on issues of concern to women. The campaign again received both international and national coverage. WMN then organized another campaign to gain support for a parliamentary petition demanding that the Ministry of Justice finalize and table the Domestic Violence Bill and that the Parliament pass the Child Care and Protection and the Child Maintenance Bills. The WMN was joined by several other groups in coordinating a march and rally at Parliament to present the petition to the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly. The petition was signed by nearly 1000 people; many who had participated in the Gender Awareness Month activities. The media presence was again sizable.

WMN's next campaign sought to require by law that women hold fifty percent of elected decision-making positions at all levels of government. Following an NDI assisted advocacy workshop and training in focus group moderation skills, the WMN conducted eleven focus groups across the country to pre-test mock posters developed as advocacy tools. Based on the information collected, the coalition printed two different posters and a pamphlet, which provided the pretext for launching the campaign and stimulating discussion at numerous regional workshops and events held in each region. The activities culminated in a WMN-

sponsored march and rally at the Parliament where the Speaker accepted a petition that was signed by nearly 3000 persons and demanded that women occupy 50% of elected government positions. In response, the National Assembly formed a Petitions Committee and granted WMN leadership an unprecedented audience with the Parliamentary Government Affairs Committee. WMN also held numerous meetings with the leadership of different political parties and the Directorate of Elections to discuss campaign demands.

### **Isolate, Infiltrate, Integrate**

The WMN won the buy-in of men and guaranteed media coverage at the parliamentary petition march and rally by co-sponsoring the event with the Multi-Media Campaign on Violence Against Women and Children and the Khomas Steering Committee of Men Against Violence Against Women. By temporarily partnering with these organizations (around an issue of common concern), WMN bridged the gender gap and increased backing from the general public. Students and faculty from several universities also participated, which ensured that the message was disseminated to a wide audience.

### **Results!**

All said, within a year and a half, WMN made significant strides in advocacy. The coalition's campaigns opened avenues of contact with the National Assembly, the National Council, various ministries, political parties, other civil society organizations and international bodies, such as the UN Commission on Human Rights and Amnesty International. Both the variety of political advocacy tools and their repeated use facilitated a continuous development of skills demonstrated, in part, by the consistent increase in public response to each campaign.

According to leaders of the WMN, NDI's technical and financial assistance yielded a number of important results:

- Improved content and formatting of the *Manifesto*, posters and pamphlet.
- Improved distribution systems for the *Manifesto*, posters and pamphlet.
- Produced clearer goals and stronger time management/program planning skills.
- Resulted in better structured training-of-trainers workshops.
- Produced more comprehensive reporting to donors.
- Increased contacts with Parliament.
- Increased contacts with the Executive.
- Improved problem resolution skills.
- Increased confidence in conducting advocacy programs.
- Decreased reliance on external technical assistance.

*This article is adapted from Maryam Montague's Exit Memo summarizing her work in Namibia. Maryam continues to be a pioneer at NDI. Her tenure with the Institute not only predates functional and regional teams, it predates Gore's invention of the Internet. Currently, she is based in Rabat, Morocco, directing a USAID ethics program to develop a code of conduct for civil servants. Beyond Namibia, Maryam has represented NDI in Bangladesh, Hong Kong, Nepal, Pakistan, Senegal and Sri Lanka.*

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## **Capacity Building through Partnership The when, why and how from Nigeria**

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Since October 1998, NDI has worked closely with Nigerian civil society and elected leaders to monitor the transition to civilian rule and support emerging democratic institutions. NDI's current program focuses primarily on legislative strengthening. However, in an effort to increase the Nigerian people's understanding of the legislative process, NDI partnered with *Centre for Free Speech* (CFS), a Nigerian NGO promoting human rights and freedom of expression. NDI's civic education project involved assisting CFS to develop and distribute a handbook explaining the role of the National Assembly as an equal branch of government in a democracy. Although the guide was well-received and filled an information gap, an unforeseen happening at its first of three planned public presentations signaled a need for NDI to address more explicitly organizational capacity-building skills with CFS as well.

**Cut to the city of Ibadan:** *The scene is of a magnificent hall, built in the late 1800's under British Colonial rule. "As far as the eye can see, rust-colored, corrugated tin roofs sweep through the valleys and up the hills, covering the area like a blanket." It's 9:00 a.m. on the day of the first public presentation of "How Our Laws Are Made". Enter, NDI...*

*Our heroes arrive at the event expecting CFS to have informed and invited NGOs from the area. Unbeknownst to NDI, CFS delegated this responsibility to a local NGO with better contacts in the region. In turn, the new "facilitator" contracted for food and drink and, without CFS's consent, participants*

*were promised per diem to cover their travel expenses.*

*Although the event begins one hour late, when it gets underway, it's hopping. Speakers representing the State Assembly, labor and local government show and deliver their remarks in the presence of 150 participants. The book is presented and praised by a professor and a lively Q and A tops off the official program. By this time, people are ready for food and drink. One slight catch, however, word of free refreshments seems to have seeped into the local market and spawned an eager crowd numbering 250 or more. Some even come forward claiming to represent unknown NGOs in order to receive (nonexistent) per diem.*

*The crowd pushes in as people vie for a handbook from among the waning supply, which CFS holds back in hopes of distributing more strategically. Unfortunately, as NDI representatives make a well-timed departure, a rumor begins to circulate that the big plastic bags containing books (which CFS is left holding) are actually bags of money left by NDI to pay per diem. When CFS members attempt to explain the lack of per diem and make ready to go, the crowd refuses, placing large rocks behind their cars. Finally, after three hours of vain explanations, police mediation and doling out their own funds, CFS representatives are allowed to leave.*

## **What Did NDI and CFS Learn?**

Despite how ready and able a partner seems when discussing program plans and signing agreements, in order to best assist in capacity-building, a clear definition of roles

and a built-in system of accountability should be established from the start (e.g., a jointly developed work plan, followed up by weekly reporting or some other mechanism). Although this is common practice in the field, oftentimes it's easy to assume that a partner has preexisting organizational capacities (i.e., event planning or organizing skills). Assume nothing - if something sounds unfeasible, it probably is. Make use of the mutually agreed upon work plan or a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) as instruments to help keep things on track. Also, periodically revisit plans and objectives to assess whether NDI can provide additional technical support. For example, the very next day following the Ibadan event, (best practice ) NDI and CFS met to discuss the previous day's proceedings and identify areas where NDI could help enhance CFS's capacity.

## **Utilizing Lessons Learned**

Both NDI and CFS came away from the Ibadan event with an understanding that upcoming public presentations would require a greater degree of active planning on the part of CFS and advising on the part of NDI. In the case of the public rollout in Kano, it was decided that NDI would play a complementary role in recruiting local NGO participation because of CFS's limited presence in that region.

**Cut to Kano:** *The public presentation of the handbook is scheduled to take place in a state high school. The venue has previously been confirmed with the school and supervising authorities. The guests begin to arrive, along with the special invitees who include*

*representatives from the Nigerian government, USAID/OTI and the British Council. Despite their conscientious efforts, our heroes are foiled yet again! To everyone's surprise, just as the presentation is to begin, a state school official declares, due to the recent implementation of "sharia" (traditional Islamic law) and resulting agitation in Kano State, the event would have to be held elsewhere. The rationale was that "the people of Kano want[ed] full implementation of 'sharia' as the supreme law above the constitution of Nigeria and not the secular law that ['How Our Laws Are Made'] describes." Unable to convince the gentleman that no unrest would result from the crowd gathered, a promising event had to be canceled. Regardless of this last minute upending, after a brief discussion, all present agreed to reschedule for a later date.*

Although the first public presentation of the civic education handbook was a "boom" and the second a "bust", NDI and CFS's partnership benefited from the increased collaboration. Subsequent lessons in planning important to CFS's growth were that adequate time must be allotted to planning each event and they should not be scheduled too closely together if there is the risk that their quality will be negatively impacted.

**Cut to Benin City:** *It's a little over two months after the Kano event and NDI and CFS are off and running again, but this time our heroes have their eyes on the prize...*

*Approximately 130 people are in attendance at this presentation of the civic education manual. Those gathered include students from*

nearby universities, representatives from civil society groups, Assembly Senators, dignitaries and interested members of the public. After the speeches, the event hits a high note with the dramatic presentation of “The Honorable”(a short skit performed by players from a state cultural troupe). In a humorous way, the drama conveys the need for citizens to play an active role in Nigeria’s new democracy and protect their rights by advocating for quality legislation. The skit also reinforces the goal of the presentation, which is to foster basic public understanding of how the National Assembly works and the limits constituents can realistically expect of their elected officials.

The meeting ends with about 400 handbooks distributed, resulting in a grand total of over 5,000 copies placed in citizen’s hands over the course of the project.

The Benin event was a tremendous success (no riots, no religious interventions and some good drama). The considerable improvement in CFS’s event planning and coordination also represented a skills transfer that will carry over into the organization’s future work. NDI’s partnership with CFS matured through gradual coaching efforts. One involved a discussion and evaluation following each presentation, which ensured that, while the event was still fresh in everyone’s minds, shortcomings could be targeted and lessons reinforced. The other element involved consistent communication with CFS to provide suggestions and guidance based on NDI’s experiences organizing similar events in the past.

## **A Note on Partnerships**

Regardless of the growing pains, the presentations created opportunities to distribute the handbooks directly to the public. They also marked the willingness of government officials to promote and participate in public information sharing. Finally, the difficulties manifested at each event helped NDI and CFS to mutually identify areas for improving CFS’s operations. Subsequently, NDI assisted CFS in broadening its organizational capacities.

This case study exemplifies issues that NDI often faces in working with local NGOs. How great a role should NDI play in helping a local partner implement program activities? Should NDI representatives actually do the lion’s share of the work, or should they play more of an advisory role? In CFS’s case, NDI allowed its partner enough space to make mistakes, but also offered coaching and guidance so that lessons could be learned and applied.

*Quatations are drawn from the reports of Wayne Propst. Wayne has served as NDI’s Country Director in Nigeria since September 2000. He previously worked as Deputy Legislative Director for Senator Jeff Bingaman (AZ-D) for seven years and served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Gabon. Wayne likes strong coffee and good prose.*

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## **Introducing and Expanding Advocacy in Indonesia**

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A challenge in Indonesia is how NGOs and other citizen groups move from a traditional role as service-providing intermediaries between the people and government to a new role,

in which they are vehicles for the political involvement of citizens? Presently, there are few Indonesian political participation experiences to draw upon for guidance, nor is it possible to determine at this time which particular forms of citizen participation might be workable within the Indonesian context (not to mention, within the contexts of each individual region).

In order to address this apparent deficit, NDI has begun to help groups organize and take actions. Part of this program targets a small group of regional partners and involves technical assistance, as well as a limited amount of financial assistance, in some case. Using this approach, NDI is helping to develop an initial set of lessons learned and best practices for conducting citizen-based advocacy in Indonesia.

Near the community of Manado on the island of Sulawesi, Kelola is an organization that NDI is working with to create some Indonesian advocacy precedents and practices.

To explore the relationship between NDI and Kelola, let’s consider a long-debated question: Which came first, the chicken or the egg? In this case, Kelola’s feathers were already ruffling before pen ever hit paper to finalize the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The egg is the product of a collaborative partnership and light-handed guidance from NDI. Initially, this effort began with cooperative planning sessions, which were followed by a training workshop on advocacy and one on NGO management.

The training resulted in Kelola’s central office revising its management structure and giving the

Executive Director clearer authority to make decisions based on a newly developed job description. Also, Kelola began examining how to strengthen the role of its constituents in organizational decision-making and activities. In making itself more efficient and responsive to its constituents, the organization is becoming better able to increase citizens' participation in politics.

In terms of capacity-building, Kelola is also developing a financial policy handbook to systematize and make transparent procedures for handling money. With this move, Kelola is attempting to demonstrate the same transparency and accountability in its internal operations that it demands from government."

In addition to formal training sessions, the MOU and an on-going series of consultations have proven to be valuable tools to both parties. "The MOU has been a useful tool. Several times we have been able to point back to [it] in order to keep our work focused on the longer term objectives of the partnership."

The results could not be more clear:

"The Kelola chapter in Gorontalo planned and implemented a successful advocacy campaign to get local government officials to regulate illegal fishing practices that destroy the environment and threaten the economic security of Kelola's constituents. As a direct result of this campaign, twelve of the fourteen illegal fishing trawlers have been run off by the Indonesian police and the deputy police chief in Gorontalo has been replaced. (These trawlers use dynamite and cyanide to fish.) The campaign has led to a significant important local win for Kelola in

controlling environmental health hazards that will be reflected in the future by improvement in the lives of Kelola's constituents."

Beyond influencing government officials, the campaign's programmatic success was reflected by the involvement of Kelola's local constituents as advocates: "In the process of this campaign, Kelola recruited and trained new volunteers who collected over 1,200 signatures. These signatures were presented to the bupati (like a governor) and political party leaders at a series of formal meetings. New community leaders were identified and empowered to lead the campaign. Kelola's activities have resulted in increased citizen participation in the political process and the empowerment of local community leaders."

Instead of letting this chapter's activities taper off in revelry of victory, a follow-up meeting was held the following week to evaluate future work in Gorontalo in light of the strengthened Kelola chapter there. This encouragement to follow-up on an activity, identify new areas and plan the next steps is a vital part of maintaining increased local participation.

*Quotations are borrowed from Ken Morely's field reports. Ken has worked with NDI for four years. He is currently conducting civil society advocacy programs in Indonesia. Formerly, he did political party and civil society work in Armenia and worked with GONG, a domestic election observation group in Croatia. Before coming to NDI he participated in campaigns on Capitol Hill. Ken is an exceptional roulette player; he once doubled his per diem*

*on the tables in Tbilisi with a DC Office Accounting Department member cheering him on!*

## Some Basic Considerations for Managing Partnerships

1. Send a consistent message about NDI's intentions and expectations. Also, be explicit about NDI's relationship to its funders (e.g., NED, USAID) and notify local partners when changes in those relationships occur.
2. Be clear about what NDI can and cannot do so that groups will not be surprised when NDI says no to some request. Even under the best circumstance, some give and take will be required.
3. Leave space for groups to make some mistakes from which they can learn, especially if they expect to continue the work independently in the future. At the same time, build in opportunities to evaluate experiences with the partner, and to help them learn lessons for the future.
4. Recognize local expertise and the existing capacities of a partner organization. This "appreciative" approach makes it easier for partners to build upon recognized strengths.
5. A good partnership requires developed relationships. For this reason, try to make sure that any succession of staff members is well-managed, in terms of sufficient overlap between old and new, etc.
6. Maintain a clear time frame. How is NDI going to leave this project without causing ripples in its relationship with its partner?

When sub-grants are involved, general accounting training and coaching at the front end can help the group develop financial management capacities and make them more accountable. Also, NDI must be cognizant of how partners view the money and NDI's role. NDI should not be viewed necessarily as "the decisionmaker" or as just a donor.

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## Triple A

(Aaron, Ashley and Allison's)

## Recommended Reading

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Carothers, Thomas, and Marina Ottaway, eds. *Funding Virtue: Civil Society Aid and Democracy Promotion*. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2000.

Funding Virtue now seems to NDI what de Tocqueville's Democracy in America was to Gov. 101--something you ought to have read, and if you hadn't, pretend that you did. But seriously, (beyond the fact that it can currently be found on the shelves of many D.C. Senior Staff members) this book is a good read for those working with civil society organizations. Five critiques examine how civil society is perceived and the rationale behind funding trends as they relate to, or fail to address, local realities in Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, Africa and Eastern Europe. Through case studies (one including an NDI program), the essays attempt to illustrate 'where programs make a difference, and where they fall short', and, 'how funding and assistance can be improved'. The book also brings to the fore the political nature of civil society aid and how funding choices hold inherent political significance.

Hammond, Sue Annis. *The Thin Book of Appreciative Inquiry*. 2d ed. Plano: Thin Book Publishing Co., 1998.

Appreciative Inquiry is the "Carl Rogers" recipe for organizational self-inventory and change. The thought behind this assessment technique is that in every

organization some things work well and change can be managed through the identification of those elements, followed by an analysis of how to apply those strengths more broadly. This book touts the development of "visionary" thinking and the need for ongoing organizational learning and improvement.

Pertschuk, Michael. *Giant Killers*. New York: W.W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1986.

Do you ever just want to go out and show government who's boss? ...Fight the big dogs face-to-face? ...Do battle against those charcoal-suited special interest empires in the name of the public good? An oldie but a goodie, the book *Giant Killers* highlights a few valiant campaigns in which public interest lobbyists (sometimes garnering support from unlikely grassroots coalitions) succeed against deep pockets and legislators firmly wed to old state loyalties. It'll get your adrenaline pumping and those flames of righteousness burning brightly! As NDI field representative in Thailand Laura Thornton recently commented: "I have plenty of work to do, but I can't put the book down."

*For these books and others, NDI's own "Fabby" librarian, Patrick Sherry can hook you up.*

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## Maryland Association of Nonprofit Organizations

*Standards for Excellence: An Ethics and Accountability Code for the Nonprofit Sector*

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The Maryland Association of Nonprofit Organizations, representing more than 500 nonprofits, has prepared a booklet on the *Standards of Excellence* for nonprofit organizations. This booklet describes how the most well managed and responsibly governed organizations should, and do operate. The Standards for Excellence provide benchmarks to determine how well an organization is fulfilling its obligations to those who benefit from its programs, to contributors, and to the public. The Maryland Association has highlighted eight guiding principles that work to promote ethical practices and accountability in nonprofit organizations.

**(1) Mission and Program:**

Nonprofits are founded for the public good and operate to accomplish a stated purpose through specific program activities. Thus a nonprofit should have a well-defined mission, and its programs should effectively and efficiently work toward achieving that mission.

**(2) Governing Body:** An effective nonprofit board should determine the mission of the organization, establish and/or approve management policies and procedures, assure that adequate human resources and financial resources are available, and actively monitor the organization's financial and programmatic performance.

**(3) Conflict of Interest:** A nonprofit should have policies in place, and should routinely and systematically implement those policies, to prevent actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest.

**(4) Human Resources:** An organization's human resources policies should address both paid employees and volunteers, and

should be fair, establish clear expectations, and provide for meaningful and effective performance evaluation.

**(5) Financial and Legal:** A nonprofit's financial system should assure that accurate financial records are kept and that the organization's financial resources are used in furtherance of the organization's charitable purposes. Organizations should conduct periodic reviews to address regulatory and liability concerns.

**(6) Openness:** Since nonprofits are private corporations that operate for public purposes with public support, they should provide the public with information about their mission, program activities, and finances. A nonprofit should also be accessible and responsive to members of the public who express interest in the affairs of the organization.

**(7) Fundraising:** An organization's fundraising program should be maintained on a foundation of truthfulness and responsible stewardship. Its fundraising practices should be consistent with its mission, compatible with its organizational capacity, and respectful of the interests of donors and prospective donors.

**(8) Public Affairs and Public Policy:** Nonprofits provide an important vehicle through which individuals organize and work together to improve their communities. Nonprofits should represent the interests of the people they serve through public education and public policy advocacy, as well as by encouraging board members, staff, volunteers and constituents to participate in the public affairs of the community.

For more information see:  
<http://www.ndnonprofit.org>

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## **War is hard on the home front too ... lessons learned educating voters and getting out the vote in the 2000 US Elections**

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On March 21, 2001, more than 80 American non-profit groups assembled to exchange war stories and identify best practices in educating voters and conducting get-out-the-vote (GOTV) activities. The groups represented a range of constituencies, such as women, blacks, gay and lesbians, Hispanics, disabled and others, and had experience working at the local, state, and national level. Over the course of the day-long event, several best practices emerged that might also be worth considering by NDI folks conducting voter education and GOTV. All of the best practices point to the need for targeted, well-planned efforts that start sooner rather than later. This has important implications for when funding is most needed (and it is not just a couple weeks out from an election). There also emerged agreement about the benefits of resource sharing among groups and other types of loose coalition arrangements. However, no one suggested maintaining the same coalitions between elections. The groups highlighted that coalition partners during an election period are often different than those for an advocacy effort or public information campaign down the road.

### **Other Notable Lessons:**

- Voter education and GOTV activities should also be



viewed as opportunities to build organizational capacity and set the stage for post-election work (e.g., increase membership and volunteers, improve media relations, build network of counterpart organizations, enhance fundraising skills).

- It is often first necessary to get citizens interested in politics. This can be done by creating opportunities for people to participate in meaningful activities (e.g., young people organizing a candidate debate focusing solely on education funding and other issues of interest to young people).
- Multiple contact with potential voters is critical and the most effective efforts generally involve some element of face-to-face contact (e.g., door-to-door, information stands, events).
- The messenger is as influential as the message. Activists from the local community are often perceived as more genuine and credible.
- Successful campaigns are targeted efforts. Complete demographic information and accurate voter lists are imperative.
- Ad-hoc coalitions can help ensure broader efforts and a better utilization of scarce resources. Coalition members often have different strengths that can be brought strategically to bear on a campaign.

with information and examples covering voter education activities:

<http://www.ACEproject.org>

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### The Citizen Participation Team “Now , what is it you do again?”

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The Citizen Participation team strives to help staff members develop, implement and evaluate high-quality, citizen participation programs worldwide. From D.C. to Dili, and Tirana to Timbuktu, NDI staff members work hard daily to strengthen and expand democracy. By providing a global perspective and functional expertise, the Citizen Participation Team helps those colleagues on the front lines identify program opportunities, maneuver around known pitfalls and draw lessons from each experience. No one should struggle alone with challenges already faced by NDI elsewhere, or reinvent the wheel on every occasion (especially when NDI’s wheels presently turn in 26 countries with active citizen participation programs). Moreover, staff members should feel confident that their own good work will be shared with their NDI counterparts in other countries and with the broader global community of democratic development practitioners. In its supporting role, the Citizen Participation Team facilitates this cross-fertilization and maintains NDI's institutional memory of what works.

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**Roundtable:** Civic Programming in Armenia  
Edmund Rhoads and Katie Fox:  
**April 5<sup>th</sup> 11:30-12:30pm 5<sup>th</sup> Floor Boardroom**

**Roundtable:** Engaging Volunteers in Lobbying at the State Level  
Nancy George: American Association Retired Persons (AARP/VOTE)

**To be announced...**

The following site offers an extensive election resource database

## **CIVIC UPDATE**

The Civic Update is a quarterly production of NDI's Citizen Participation Team. We ask that you please send any comments or suggestions you may have to Citizen Participation Team Members Aaron Azelton (aaron@ndi.org) or Ashley Orton (Aorton@ndi.org). Also, we are always on the look out for insightful articles to include in the newsletter, so please do not hesitate to send us any ideas or submissions for future issues. The next Update will focus on working with civic groups on voter education and GOTV domestic election monitoring projects.

Thanks and we sincerely hope you found this newsletter of interest.

For back issues of the Civic Update refer to:  
<http://www.ndi.org/civup.htm>

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