

NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE

NDI

Working for democracy and making democracy work



The National Democratic Institute (NDI) is a nonpartisan, nongovernmental organization that responds to the worldwide quest for popular civic participation, open and competitive political systems, and representative and accountable government.

Since its founding in 1983, NDI and its local partners have worked to establish and strengthen democratic institutions and practices by building political and civic organizations, safeguarding elections, and promoting citizen participation, openness and accountability in government. With staff members and

volunteer political practitioners from more than 100 nations, NDI brings together individuals and groups to share ideas, knowledge, experiences and expertise. Partners receive broad exposure to best practices in international democratic development that can be adapted to the needs of their own countries. NDI's multinational approach reinforces the message that while there is no single democratic model, certain core principles are shared by all democracies.

The Institute's work upholds the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It also promotes the development of institutionalized channels of communication among citizens, political institutions and elected officials, and strengthens their ability to improve the quality of life for all citizens.

*“ Democracy is never a final achievement. It is a call
to an untiring effort. ”*

– John F. Kennedy

REPORTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

NDI's story is best told through its programs and accomplishments in the 79 countries where it works. The Institute puts a priority on long-term institution building, which is central to achieving democratic governance, stability and prosperity. Here are some examples:



NDI's Civic Forum program has helped more than 200,000 **Haitians** learn about their rights and responsibilities as citizens. They have formed more than 180 community action groups to improve life in local communities. Working with elected officials, the committees have built health clinics, schools and roads; worked on reforestation and watershed soil conservation projects; increased access to clean water; and planted community gardens. Similar Civic Forum programs, underway in several countries with extreme poverty or that are emerging from conflict, promote reconciliation and show how participation in the democratic process can improve standards of living.

In Chocó, **Colombia**, a majority Afro-Colombian state, democracy has been undermined by years of poverty, violence, illiteracy, corruption and neglect. NDI is working to build democratic governance by helping Chocoans to organize politically and hold elected officials accountable. For October 2007 municipal elections, NDI worked with 10 political parties to combat vote buying, organize candidate debates, and train poll watchers. After the election, NDI helped citizens present policy options to the governor-elect. After taking office, he asked them to participate in the region's development plans.

Monitoring and voter education by political parties and civic organizations contributed to the success of **Sierra Leone's** 2007 peaceful presidential and parliamentary elections, the second since the end of a decade-long civil war. NDI worked with over 300 party poll watchers, who then trained thousands of activists to monitor procedures on election day. NDI's partner, the National Election Watch (NEW), fielded 5,400 observers who covered more than 80 percent of the country's polling places. NEW, with NDI help, used an innovative short message service (SMS) reporting system to collect and analyze information quickly. NEW's independent assessment of the election helped to instill confidence in the official election results.



In the **Middle East and North Africa**, NDI has helped create opportunities for democrats to exchange experiences and build support structures. Political party leaders across the democratic spectrum established the Congress of Democrats from the Islamic World to develop a platform for democratic governance and policies responsive to citizens' needs. Arab women have secured more representation in the Moroccan parliament, gained voting rights in Kuwait, won local and national office in Jordan, achieved elected office in the Gulf region and formed the Saudi Women's Action Network. Burgeoning groups of civic activists assess election systems while improving domestic monitoring efforts. Networks of municipal councilors work to influence policy debates and increase collaboration among local government bodies.

In **Afghanistan**, one of several NDI initiatives involves work with National Assembly representatives who form the backbone of the Parliamentary Women's Network, a group of government and civil society activists who work to shape legislation and influence government policies on issues of importance to women. With support from NDI, the network promotes the inclusion of women in all aspects of Afghanistan's political, social, economic and cultural life. Initiatives include working to pass legislation to prevent violence against women, amend the nation's civil code to promote gender equality, and solicit more funding from the government for girls' education.



After **Indonesia's** transition from authoritarianism, municipal and district governments acquired new control over local budgets. That created the need for citizen watchdogs to monitor public spending. NDI created a program to help citizens in 14 districts play an active role in budget creation and accountability. Their work has led to improved services, such as making local health clinics more responsive to citizen complaints and ending an illegal fees syndicate that was diverting money from local schools in East Java.

In **Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan**, NDI has established 28 information centers that help increase access to independent sources of information and foster public participation. Located outside of major cities, the centers produce and distribute news digests and host training and community discussions on local and national issues. The centers also aid dialogue between citizens and local governments and have inspired the creation of citizen networks and organizations. Each month, more than 8,500 citizens use the centers to gain information, skills and opportunities to participate more effectively in civic life and hold elected officials accountable.

With the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement, **Sudan** began moving from decades of conflict toward a new democratic system. NDI is working to help bridge the gap between citizens and government. A civic education radio program – "Let's Talk" – produced in partnership with Sudan Radio Service, introduces information about new government institutions and processes, such as a national census, and encourages citizens to discuss and participate in the country's evolving political process. NDI is distributing 250,000 wind-up and solar-powered radios that are being used to educate and inform more than eight million people in 15,000 villages in Southern Sudan and the Three Areas – Abyei, Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile.

After seeing how their Hungarian counterparts communicate with citizens, several legislators in **Macedonia** opened constituency offices with NDI's help. Their move caught on, leading to some 50 such offices around the country. The offices have become effective conduits for citizens of all ethnic backgrounds and political affiliations to communicate with their representatives. More than 125,000 visitors have raised issues such as education and retirement benefits, with their requests tracked through a computerized casework database. Initially funded by grants and in-kind donations from European and North American governments, the offices moved a step closer to permanence with direct funding from the Macedonian parliament.

POLITICAL PARTY BUILDING

NDI works with its partners on methods of political party building – from internal democratic procedures and candidate selection to polling, platform development and public outreach. NDI offers assistance to promote parties' long-term organizational development, enhance their involvement in elections, establish codes of conduct, mitigate political conflict, and help them participate constructively in government. The Institute also works to promote dialogue across party lines.

NDI is a nonpartisan organization that draws proudly on the traditions of the U.S. Democratic Party. Its programs seek to advance universal values and support all democratic systems of governance rather than particular parties or ideologies. NDI is the only organization that enjoys official standing in the international groupings of Social Democratic, Liberal and Centrist Democratic political parties. Together, the three "internationals" represent approximately 350 parties in 150 countries. They and NDI have sought to increase understanding of the key role political party development plays in consolidating democratic systems.

DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

Studies have shown that having a strong national legislature is one of the keys to democratic governance. NDI works with legislatures around the world to support lawmakers and staff in strengthening committees, legislative oversight, rules of procedure, public access to information, caucuses and constituency outreach. The Institute helps government ministries and the offices of prime ministers and presidents to function more efficiently, improve public outreach and be more responsive to the public at large. NDI also supports the efforts of provincial councils and local governments to respond more effectively to citizen needs.



WOMEN IN POLITICS

NDI partners with democrats around the world to develop and promote strategies for increasing women's political participation by creating an environment in which women can advocate on matters of policy, successfully run for political office, govern effectively, and participate meaningfully in every facet of civic and political life. The Institute's Win with Women Global Initiative promotes strategies to increase women's leadership roles in political parties. iKNOW Politics, the International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics (iknowpolitics.org), is an online community dedicated to advancing and supporting women in politics. Women use the online forum to share experiences and access information, with about 2,500 visits per day. It was founded by NDI in partnership with the UN Development Programme, the UN Development Fund for Women, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, and the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

The Internet, cell phones and other technologies are helping citizens engage in politics in increasingly innovative and participatory ways. Recognized as one of "The Top 10 Who Are Changing the World of the Internet and Politics," NDI adapts new technology to the unique political challenges facing developing democracies. Examples include innovations in the use of cell phone text messaging in election monitoring in Indonesia, Montenegro, Albania, Sierra Leone and elsewhere, and devising web strategies and database tools to aid political party building and parliamentary reform. NDI also creates Internet portals to connect aspiring democrats and activists around the world, such as Aswat, an online resource for Arabic speaking activists across the Middle East.

ELECTIONS

NDI engages with political parties and civic organizations in voter and civic education, electoral law reform and monitoring all phases of the election process. These programs build public confidence, accountability and legitimacy of governments. NDI has worked with more than 300 citizen groups and coalitions in 74 countries that have mobilized over two million election monitors, engaged with hundreds of parties promoting electoral integrity and organized over 100 NDI international election observation delegations around the world. NDI has also played a leading role in establishing standards for international election observation.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Deepening democracy so it can provide tangible improvements to people's lives is an overarching objective of NDI's citizen participation programs. Making democracy work requires informed and active citizens who understand how to voice their interests, act collectively and hold public officials accountable. NDI's civic programs – including civic and voter education, get-out-the-vote efforts, issue organizing and advocacy, budget oversight and government monitoring – help citizens engage actively in the political process and serve as a link between citizens and elected officials.

“...the effort to translate the promise of democracy into the reality of a better life can be frustrating, slow and hard. There are no guarantees of success. Those who truly wish to live in freedom must demonstrate that commitment not once, but over and over again.”

– NDI Chairman Madeleine K. Albright



AWARDS AND RECOGNITION FOR DEMOCRACY ADVOCATES

NDI annually presents its W. Averell Harriman Democracy Award to an individual or organization that has demonstrated a sustained commitment to democracy and human rights. Past recipients have included Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf; UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan; the Organization of American States; the eight political party leaders who negotiated the Northern Ireland peace agreement; Varela Project leader Oswaldo Payá of Cuba; Burmese democratic leader Aung San Suu Kyi; Czech Republic President Vaclav Havel; the late Polish Foreign Minister Bronislaw Geremek; East Timor President Xanana Gusmão; Chile's 1988 Free Election Movement; the late Georgian Prime Minister Zurab Zhvania; former Presidents Bill Clinton and Jimmy Carter; former Vice President Walter Mondale;

Senators Edward Kennedy, Joseph Biden, Richard Lugar and George Mitchell; the late AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland; Linda and the late Peter Biehl of the Amy Biehl Foundation in South Africa; and UN Ambassador Madeleine K. Albright.

Established in 2005, the Madeleine K. Albright Grant builds on NDI's Win With Women Initiative to honor organizations that exhibit exceptional promise in creating a greater role for women in political and civic life. The \$25,000 grant supports specific initiatives to further women's political participation. Past recipients have included the Women's Political Caucus of Indonesia, the Mostar Women Citizens' Initiative of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the 50/50 Group of Sierra Leone.

The programs of the National Democratic Institute are supported by the National Endowment for Democracy, the U.S. Agency for International Development, the U.S. Department of State, other international development agencies and private donations. NDI is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporation. Contributions to the Institute are tax deductible.

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ADVANCING DEMOCRACY THROUGH SHARED INFORMATION

Since its inception, NDI has produced training materials, manuals and reports that aid in the exchange of information, experiences and expertise. As electronic communication has progressed so has NDI's work in this area, helping partners develop websites and other online techniques for bringing people together and sharing knowledge. The Institute's own website, ndi.org, serves as a repository for information gathered from the five continents on which NDI works.

