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National Democratic Institute
Working for democracy and making democracy work

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2013: Into our Fourth Decade



Libyans participated last year in their first democratic elections in more than four decades. Photo by Megan Doherty

Happy new year! 2013 is a particularly special one for NDI because we're celebrating our 30th anniversary. While our work today is carried out through 65 offices around the world and a staff representing nearly 100 nationalities, it wasn't always that way. We began as a small Washington-based organization that opened its first office — in Romania — in 1991. Through the years, we've worked in 130 countries to support and strengthen democratic institutions, safeguard elections, promote citizen participation, women's empowerment and accountability in government.

A major activity in the election arena has been helping citizens monitor their own polls to promote involvement and public confidence, while holding officials and contestants accountable for their electoral conduct. To codify standards for such efforts, NDI aided the launch at a UN ceremony last year of the [Declaration of Global Principles for citizen election monitors](#), which is now endorsed by more than 180 civic groups representing more than four million citizen monitors, and supported by key international organizations. [Ghana](#), Kenya, [Libya](#) and Ukraine are just a few of the places where the declaration's principles are being put into action, as NDI helps groups become more effective, including through innovative use of social media and mobile phone applications.

Along with the UN Electoral Assistance Division and the Carter Center, NDI also led in the development of global standards for international observers. The [Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation](#), launched in 2005 at the UN, is now endorsed by 42 intergovernmental and international

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organizations. In November the Institute **hosted the seventh annual meeting** on the declaration, which stressed cooperation and coordination among international observers and local citizen monitors, and the need to advocate for better implementation of observer recommendations for improving electoral integrity. In the past year, NDI international delegations observed electoral processes in **Algeria, Georgia, Jordan, Kenya, Pakistan, Ukraine** and the **West Bank**.



A voter casts her ballot in Tbilisi, Georgia. Photo by Kathy Gest

As part of its effort to support democratic governance, NDI works with citizen-led parliamentary monitoring organizations (PMO) that advocate for open parliaments that reflect citizens' voices. Last spring, NDI and its partner organizations brought together civil society members from around the world who **agreed to a declaration of principles** on parliamentary transparency. The **Declaration on Parliamentary Openness** is currently supported by more than 100 civil society organizations in more than 70 countries.

The PMO conference focused on ways to use technology to make information about parliaments more accessible to the public, which is already happening in many places, such as **Peru** and **Uganda**. Citizens are increasingly holding their elected leaders accountable offline, too. From **Cambodia** to **Mexico** to **South Sudan**, citizens are lining up to speak directly to their representatives at constituent dialogues — town hall style meetings where citizens can bring up issues they face every day and lawmakers can explain themselves and their positions to voters.



Burkinabe women wait in line to receive a birth certificate - one of the documents required to register to vote. Photo by Aminata Kassé

There is a growing recognition that democracies with more women in power are more equitable and transparent, and a priority of NDI is to work with and for women to help them achieve tangible political gains. From helping thousands of women in **Burkina Faso** get a birth certificate, which will allow them to register to vote, to training the only indigenous woman governor in **Guatemala**, to working across party lines to halt the legalization of polygamy in **Kyrgyzstan**, NDI has helped women around the world participate in politics and achieve elected office.

In its political party work, NDI assists parties across the democratic political spectrum. The Institute has worked this past year with political parties in **Libya, Kenya** and **Sierra Leone** to sign codes of conduct that commit them to peaceful political activities. To help parties build platforms that respond to citizen needs, NDI has supported public opinion research and shared the findings with parties. In the past year, the Institute conducted research in **Albania, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Georgia, Iraq, Libya, Morocco, Papua New Guinea, South Sudan** and **Tunisia**.

As it has done every four years since 1984, the Institute hosted the International Leaders Forum during the Democratic National Convention, held last year in Charlotte, N.C. NDI

hosted **nearly 400 international visitors** who attended a series of bipartisan panel discussions on the American political system, foreign and domestic policy, and other topics. Later in the election season, it partnered with the Commission on Presidential Debates to **host an international delegation at Hofstra University**. The 25 visitors, from 12 countries, came to exchange information about putting on debates in their own countries and witness first-hand the intricacies of organizing the second presidential debate.

In September, NDI and the International Republican Institute honored Burmese democracy activist and Member of Parliament **Aung San Suu Kyi** at a dinner during her first visit to the U.S. in more than 20 years. And in November, NDI partnered with the U.S. State Department to convene government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, private companies, academics and technologists at a **Tech@State** conference to explore new uses for technology in elections.



Madeleine K. Albright and Aung San Suu Kyi at a dinner honoring the Burmese democracy leader in September. Photo by Chan Chao

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For Pakistan Elections, NDI Delegation Finds Both Cautious Optimism and Serious Challenges



Recognizing the importance of Pakistan's 2013 elections to the country's future, an

NDI pre-election assessment mission found cautious optimism among Pakistanis, but cited serious challenges that could impact the integrity of the polls. The delegation's report included recommendations that could help ensure more credible elections. [Read more»](#)

Mexican Women's Coalition Pushes for Reform, Creates "Toolkit" for Advocacy

Despite strides in winning election to

Jordanian Elections Show Marked Improvement From Past Polls But Shortcomings Remain



An international delegation fielded by NDI to observe Jordan's Jan. 23 parliamentary

elections saw a marked improvement in procedures and administration from past polls, but also found ongoing shortcomings, irregularities and systemic distortions. The delegation offered a number of recommendations that could enhance the integrity of future elections. [Read more»](#)

Training Program Prepares Nicaragua's Next Generation of Leaders

In Nicaragua, where nearly 70 percent of citizens are under



national office, Mexican women lag behind their male counterparts at the municipal level,

where only 6.1 percent of the nation's 2,400 municipal presidents are women. A new toolkit helps women organize and carry out advocacy campaigns to increase state resources for political party women's programs and improve how the money is spent. [Read more»](#)

In Ghana, Voter Education through Radio, Mobile Phones

In Ghana's recent general elections, NDI partnered with the Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO), a local group focused on election accountability, to produce and distribute a series of radio announcements designed to help voters stay informed throughout the campaign. [Read more»](#)



30, more than 1,000 young leaders have taken part in the Certificate on

Leadership and Political Management, an annual training program launched by NDI and its partners aimed at equipping Nicaraguan youth with the skills to govern effectively. Now, those graduates are winning local office, rising in the ranks of political parties, and organizing civic projects in their communities. [Read more»](#)

Candidate Schools Help Women in West Africa Compete and Win



In Burkina Faso and Sierra Leone, more women than ever before were candidates in recent elections. To help

them get on the ballot and run successful campaigns, NDI organized a series of candidate training schools in both countries for women seeking national and local offices. In Sierra Leone, 10 of the 15 women elected to parliament had attended NDI's training, along with 74 of the 87 elected as local councilors. [Read more»](#)

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