



NATIONAL
DEMOCRATIC
INSTITUTE

Working for **Democracy** and Making Democracy **Work**

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Working for Democracy

For more than four decades, we have found that, whatever its shortfalls, democracy works.

When NDI opened its doors in 1983, we were given a mission but not a roadmap. The Institute quickly built an international network of experts willing to share their experiences, successes and failures in the creation of democracy. NDI promoted democratic reform in the Philippines and Chile in the 1980s, in Eastern Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall and across Africa, Asia and Latin America following the end of the Cold War. The work has grown exponentially since then.

Throughout its history, NDI has prioritized creativity and innovation in crafting programs that address the unique context of each country. Support for open and transparent governance, monitoring of fair and credible elections, strengthening democratic institutions to become more responsive and the inclusion of every voice are the hallmarks of our work.

While democracy's success is neither inevitable nor irreversible, free people in every corner of the world still yearn for democracy. Today, more than ever, people want freedom and democracy to deliver prosperity, security, and strength. The false promises of authoritarians will never fully deliver those desires.

At NDI, we are privileged to work with exceptional individuals whose tireless efforts on behalf of human dignity make the world a more just, secure and prosperous place. We are honored to join them in their struggle as they work for democracy and make democracy work.



Tom Daschle
NDI Board Chair

“The defining issue of the 21st century is the fight between democracy and authoritarianism. The work NDI does has never been more important or in demand than at this moment in time.”



Tamara Cofman Wittes
NDI President

“NDI’s mission is both inspiring and essential: we strive for a world where all people’s voices are heard, and where democracy’s promise of a brighter future is open to everyone who seeks it.”

Tom Daschle
NDI Chair

Tamara Cofman Wittes
NDI President



Making Democracy Work

Countering Authoritarian Threats to Democracy

The struggle between democracies and authoritarianism has severely escalated in the last two decades. The Chinese Communist Party, the Kremlin and other authoritarian regimes are engaged in a global effort to undermine democratic institutions and norms. They help illiberal governments restrict access to information, bypass oversight and avoid accountability to strengthen the corrupt networks that sustain their regimes. Environmental degradation and mass migration are further exacerbating tensions and undermining democracies. To counter these threats, NDI works with partners to shine a light on illiberal influences, improve debt transparency, strengthen democratic institutions and develop environmental governance and resilience initiatives.

Defending Electoral Integrity

Electoral integrity is under assault globally like never before. While democracy is more than elections, meaningful democracy is impossible without a credible electoral process. NDI works to protect the right to vote, to engage people in the electoral process and to monitor the information environment around elections. NDI helped pioneer international election observation, co-led the development of the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation endorsed by over 50 international organizations and is a founding member of the Global Network for Securing Electoral Integrity. Through the Global Network for Domestic Election Monitors, NDI empowers citizen observers to independently assess the accuracy of election results through the process and results verification for transparency (PRVT) methodology.

Doubling Down on Women's Political Equality

NDI's commitment to Changing the Face of Politics is key to strengthening democratic resilience. Despite the ongoing backlash against gender equality, a wide diversity of women continues to lead and mobilize social movements to address global challenges. NDI works with women to overcome barriers to their political empowerment using ground-breaking approaches such as the Win With Women political party assessment, think10 safety planning tool, Men, Power and Politics guidance to address political masculinities, the #NotTheCost campaign to end in-person and online violence against women in politics and the DISRUPTHER module to deepen the pool of adolescent girls with the skills and confidence to accelerate the pace towards political equality.

Inspiring Youth Leadership

Despite making up more than half the population in many countries, young people are often shut out of mainstream politics and decision-making. NDI helps young people become political leaders and activists by breaking down barriers, developing technical skills and building intergenerational relationships. NDI's "Speak Youth to Power" campaign helps young people translate their power into sustained influence over political decision-making now and sets them up to defend democracy in the future. NDI's Change My Community Toolbox helps young people run grassroots advocacy campaigns, and the Youth Leading Debate program hones skills in the art of policy debate.

Increasing the Power of Marginalized Communities

Political inclusion is fundamental to deepening democracy, defending human rights and ensuring equality. Democracy is more likely to develop and endure when all citizens are free to participate in and influence political processes and outcomes without suffering discrimination or reprisal. In many new and emerging democracies, large portions of the population are excluded from politics based on their age, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or other identity factors. NDI works to increase the organizing and activism of marginalized communities so they can protect their rights and freedoms and join in political decisions affecting the public welfare.

Working in Conflict Zones and Closed Societies

In conflict-affected states, NDI works to include citizens and end political and social grievances. NDI supports peaceful democratic transitions and the inclusion of women and marginalized communities in post-conflict reconstruction. The Institute helps political parties in countries with histories of ethnic conflict develop constituent-driven policies and helps citizens engage in reconciliation efforts that reshape political and social relationships away from those that led to violence in the first place. In closed societies, NDI builds the political capacity of democracy activists for the moment when a more open, democratic society becomes possible.



Improving Governance and Accountability

Transparent, participatory and inclusive governance reduces corruption, builds public trust and improves lives. NDI collaborates on innovative programming with legislative, government and civil society partners through the Open Government Partnership to promote global norms of transparency and integrity, support feedback loops to strengthen engagement between government and communities on policy priorities and facilitate Gender Intentional Local Governance. The Executive Transitions program promotes smooth, peaceful transitions of power in the wake of democratic elections. NDI, together with the International Republican Institute (IRI), supports the House Democracy Partnership, a bipartisan commission of the U.S. House of Representatives that facilitates parliamentary learning.

Renewing Political Parties

Political parties are essential democratic institutions, enabling citizens to organize around common interests, choose political leaders and develop government policies. However, in many countries, citizens no longer trust parties and instead participate in politics through other means. To help political parties build in new and more effective ways, NDI developed the Win With Integrity assessment to boost party integrity and the Party Network Collaboration effort to bring democratic parties together to solve common problems. NDI's Closing Spaces and Movement-Based Parties initiatives explore how parties can represent citizens in challenging political environments and through different, non-traditional strategies.

Building a Digital Ecosystem for Democracy

Digital technologies and platforms enable the flow of information that can improve democracies — but are also used by authoritarians to silence and inflict harm on civic and political actors, especially women and vulnerable groups. NDI empowers global voices to preserve an Open Internet and builds global networks through the Info/tegrity Initiative to help communities promote democratic values and become more resilient to online harms through the Design 4 Democracy Coalition. NDI also helps protect civic and political activists, parties and individuals through enhanced digital security and awareness. As technologies evolve, the Institute helps steer them toward improving political engagement, oversight and credible elections instead of causing harm.

Partnering with Citizen Activists

Strong and vibrant partnerships with civic groups are a pillar of NDI's approach to democracy. NDI helps local groups join forces to promote the public interest, offer policy solutions and hold government officials accountable for their actions. These efforts enable local partners to use multiple entry points into the political process, including electoral participation, policy deliberations with elected officials, public expenditure tracking and monitoring service delivery.

Our Mission

NDI is a non-profit, non-partisan, non-governmental organization that works in partnership around the world to strengthen and safeguard democratic institutions, processes, norms and values to secure a better quality of life for all. NDI envisions a world where democracy and freedom prevail, with dignity for all.

Lessons Learned

When people have the choice, they choose democracy

Democracy is the first choice for those demanding change, with women and youth at the forefront. Authoritarians attack democracies because free choice by free people could end their regimes.

Democracy delivers better results

Democracies are better at delivering strength, security and prosperity. Authoritarian governments are inherently weaker, more prone to war and more likely to concentrate economic benefits within a corrupt elite.

Democratic principles are universal and adaptable

While there is no single democratic model, all democracies share core principles that can be applied to fit each local context. International support bolsters confidence and helps local partners overcome obstacles to democratic development.

Inclusion is essential

Dialogue, compromise, inclusion and respect for the rule of law are fundamental to democratic success. Democracy thrives when all segments of society participate equally without bias or reprisal.

Democratic development is cost-effective

Democratic development pays for itself many times over — helping to avert war, humanitarian crises, refugee flows and violent extremism, which are far more costly in the long run.

Democracy takes time

Every democracy, no matter how developed, is a work in progress that requires the tireless efforts of a determined and engaged citizenry in order to safeguard democratic norms.

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NDI By The Numbers

SUPPORTED THE EFFORTS OF:

16,500 CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS

1,000 POLITICAL PARTIES

10,000 LEGISLATORS

1,300 WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS

PROGRAMS IN OVER:

70 COUNTRIES WITH 55 FIELD OFFICES

WORKED IN MORE THAN:

150 COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES AROUND THE WORLD

HELPED PARTNER GROUPS ORGANIZE MORE THAN:

450 CANDIDATE DEBATES IN OVER 50 COUNTRIES

HELPED OVER:

300 CITIZEN ELECTION MONITORING ORGANIZATIONS TRAIN AND DEPLOY

4,000,000 ELECTION OBSERVERS IN

450 ELECTIONS AND REFERENDA IN OVER 90 COUNTRIES

FIELDED OVER:

300 INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVER DELEGATIONS IN MORE THAN 70 COUNTRIES

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