A Guide to Political Party Development

Table of Contents

Preface

Political parties form a cornerstone of democratic society. They aggregate the interests of the public, articulate them in the form of policy options and provide structures for political participation. In addition, they train political leaders and contest elections to seek a measure of control over government institutions.

For over 25 years, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) has worked with political parties from across the political spectrum in more than 60 countries around the world. The Institute's programs aim to deepen and expand democratic values and practices by enhancing political parties' capacity to operate in a professional, transparent and peaceful manner. The Institute provides information and technical assistance in the following principal areas on an inclusive and multipartisan basis:

- Election preparation and accountability;
- Internal operational and structural development;
- Political parties in parliament; and
- Legal frameworks for party and electoral operations.

As a party institute, NDI approaches its party strengthening from a practical perspective that recognizes and builds upon incentives for reforms that promote parties' long-term organizational development, enhance their competitiveness in local and national elections, and help them participate constructively in government. This programming lies at the heart of the Institute's mission and goals.

This guide is intended to provide practical insight into political party development programming. Like earlier editions, it attempts to address why political party development is important, how party programs can be conducted and how to tailor projects to specific political environments.* In addition, this third edition reflects some of the more recent trends in the Institute's political party development work. These include an increased emphasis on tailoring assistance to the individual needs of political parties operating within the same political context as well as greater use of guided practice to achieve more sustainable results and impact. Incorporating public opinion research and information communication technology have also become stronger foci in programs, as have policy development, caucus-strengthening.

As more organizations become involved in party development, programs continue to evolve, and further lessons are learned, future editions may be necessary. As such, this handbook is not intended to be the last or the exhaustive word on this important aspect of expanding democracy. NDI would like to thank all who assisted in the development of this guide and welcomes any feedback.

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* In 2001, NDI held a conference of party experts and experienced staff in Vienna, Austria to collect and examine best practices in party programs. Based on the discussion and analysis, the Parties team developed the first edition of this handbook. It was updated in a second edition in 2003.

Chapter One

NDI's Approach to Working with Political Parties

Political parties are a central feature of any modern democracy. They are the vehicles by which citizens come together freely to campaign for public office and win seats in a legislative body, to express their interests and needs, and define their aspirations for their society. Democracy can only exist and thrive where parties play their critical – even unique – roles in politics.

NDI partners with democratic, nonviolent, and viable political parties to enhance their ability to play these roles. The Institute's programs support efforts to improve internal operations and procedures; campaign strategies, messages, and platforms; and parties' work in the legislature. The overall goal is to foster a vibrant, multiparty system, with parties that are:

- *Representative* – Parties aggregate and clarify the public interest, defining and developing common ideas about a country's future that can be enacted through the legislature.

- *Transparent* – They provide opportunities for the public to learn about their political system, participate in politics, and monitor the government.

- *Foster Accountability* – They present meaningful political choices to the public, allowing them to choose between different governments, policies, and leaders in elections.

- *Effective* – They are able to better compete for elected office by reaching out to the public and advocating for policies to improve their society.

While in the 1980s and 1990s many organizations and funders focused on fostering civil society, increasingly these groups have come to

"[Democracy 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."

~ David Broder

recognize that domestic NGOs do not and cannot perform the functions that parties do. As political organizations, with access to the national and local legislatures and budgets, parties have a unique role in aggregating a broad range of public priorities and balancing competing interests. Even organizations which focus on public works, health, and infrastructure have begun to see parties as invaluable in overseeing the government, checking corruption, and ensuring that their assistance is distributed in an equitable manner.

Individually, parties are the main avenues for public political participation, and they also provide channels for citizens to influence their government. In a healthy, competitive multiparty system, each party must constantly reach out to the public to remain relevant and continually improve its operations and practices. The presentation of and debate over different policy proposals also forces each party to refine its own ideas and seek common ground with others, resulting in better outcomes for the public. Parties' success in conducting these tasks is measured in several ways, most critically in an election.

As such, a key distinction between parties and NGOs is that the former are driven by the desire to seek and hold public office. In competing for these positions, parties have important incentives to perform a variety of political functions and to do them well, like nominating popular candidates, organizing political competition, unifying portions of the electorate, and translating policy preferences into public policies. They actively search for better practices that will allow them to capture more votes, and are naturally concerned with keeping certain information – like campaign strategies – away from their competitors.

NDI'S APPROACH TO PARTY PROGRAMMING

In many of the countries where the Institute works, parties are confronting a transition from authoritarian to democratic government. In other countries, well-established electoral and party systems are undergoing substantial changes, and parties are being challenged by new political actors.

PRINCIPLES OF NDI PARTY PROGRAMS

The Multipartisan Approach
NDI typically works with a range of viable, nonviolent, and democratically-oriented parties in a country, regardless of ideology. The Institute's goal is to create a vibrant and sustainable party system by enhancing each individual party's capacity to compete and represent the public.

Understanding Party Interests
As competitive organizations, parties have a fundamental interest in winning or maintaining political power. NDI builds the incentives for internal reform by shaping its programs around these interests. In addition, the Institute keeps its partners' sensitive procedures, strategies, and challenges confidential.

Building Partnerships Based on Trust
The Institute seeks to foster a genuine partnership with the parties it works with, especially by communicating and collaborating with party leaders about program activities and strategy.

Comparative Perspectives
NDI can draw upon its years of global political party experience to provide partners with examples of party reform from similar political and electoral systems.

Tailored Packages of Assistance
NDI assistance on improving party operations and procedures is most effective and will generate the most support when it is tailored to the specific needs of our partners.

Guided Practice and Follow-On Assistance
In order to foster sustainable practices, NDI provides partners with opportunities to apply skills, receive feedback, and become more confident in implementing change.

Parties often find themselves ill-equipped to understand and adjust to these political changes. Some may find themselves in opposition after years of unchallenged government, operating in a political environment where their history is itself a liability. Others may concentrate so much on the new electoral system that they ignore the internal capacity building needed for their party to develop over the longer term. Such changes to the status quo throw up new challenges for all parties involved.

These challenges also present important opportunities and "points of entry" for NDI to engage with parties. Drawing upon over 20 years of experience in diverse political environments, the Institute can provide critical insight into more effective and democratic party operations and practices. To do this, NDI has developed a comprehensive approach to working with parties, based on the following general principles:

- Multipartisan Programs
- Understanding Party Interests
- Building Partnerships Based on Trust
- Comparative Perspectives
- Tailored Assistance
- Guided Practice

Multipartisan Programs

NDI works with the non-violent, democratic, and viable parties in a country to enhance their individual operations and ability to compete in elections. Its approach is multipartisan: seeking to foster a variety of political ideologies and parties capable of advocating effectively for their positions.

THE PARTY INTERNATIONALS

NDI has buttressed its multipartisan approach through its relationship with the three largest party internationals. These organizations – Centrist Democrat International, Liberal International, and Socialist International – are large groupings of like-minded parties.

The Institute is the only organization to have official standing in all three bodies. Together they represent more over 325 parties from 150 countries from across the ideological spectrum.

Also, unlike the German party foundations – which only work with the parties that match their ideology – NDI does not advise parties on specific policies. Rather, it works on the "nuts and bolts" of party practices: establishing the internal mechanisms to reach out to the voters, incorporating public opinion into their policies, and representing constituents in the legislature. The long-term goal of the Institute's work is to foster a competitive multiparty system, rather than advance a particular ideological position.

Understanding Party Interests

The long-term goal of NDI's work is to foster a competitive multiparty system by building a range of parties' abilities to effectively campaign, represent the public, and develop and implement effective policies.

As competitive organizations, parties share a fundamental concern for winning or maintaining political power. Their operations—and any changes or reforms they consider adopting—are evaluated based on whether it helps them meet this goal. NDI designs its programs to account for these interests. Activities create incentives for internal reform by demonstrating how new practices can help them win over a greater share of the electorate, pass legislation, or meet other objectives.

NDI's work is often a matter of balancing interests: managing a party's desire to become more operationally effective alongside the Institute objectives in promoting democratic values. The overall goal is to demonstrate that grassroots outreach, open accountability, and greater representation of the public – in short, democratic practice – have themselves given parties a competitive edge in countries around the world.

In addition, while parties perform many unique and vital functions for democratic governance, they have strong interests in keeping certain information confidential. In some cases, this impulse is reasonable and necessary. For example, revealing

fundamentally harm the party's ability to operate effectively.

The Institute accounts for these interests by tailoring its strategies to the parties' individual circumstances. For example, many programs begin by working with groups or organs within the party to generate momentum for adopting new practices. Or, while the Institute often uses multiparty meetings to build confidence among partners and foster discussion on common issues, it switches to single party consultations in order to discuss sensitive subjects like electoral strategies. Knowing when to make this move to tailored, bilateral assistance with individual parties is a key element in demonstrating the Institute's regard for the parties' interests.

Building Partnership Based on Trust

For the Institute's programming to be effective, parties must see NDI as a competent and trusted source of information and assistance. The multipartisan approach allows NDI to act as a neutral broker and partner, while our understanding of partner interests allows us to more effectively align our goals with parties' needs.

Leadership Buy-In
The Institute also stresses the importance of party leadership support for its programs, even when not working with the party headquarters or national officials. Staff should discuss program details with party leaders – particularly during the initial stages of a project. These can include:

1. Program goals and the benefits they can expect to see;
2. The limits to NDI's assistance and partnership;
3. Their party's responsibilities;
4. How success will be measured.

Many programs have also established formal chan-

nels or periodic meetings where party leaders can provide input on program direction and content. In addition, strong buy-in can be an excellent asset to draw upon while conducting activities. Party leaders are often instrumental in clearing bureaucratic hurdles and generating internal support for NDI's projects.

Confidentiality
In addition, because NDI works with parties that compete against each other, staff should assure our partners that their conversations and any strategy documents they share will not be passed to

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Strong leadership buy-in is an excellent asset to draw upon while conducting activities.

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other parties or organizations. Keeping their confidence is often a prerequisite for working with partners on more sensitive issues of strategy. Furthermore, NDI's work is most effective when partners trust the Institute enough to openly share their concerns and operational challenges.

Party Ownership
NDI plays, at most, a facilitative role for parties. Their support for Institute activities – and their belief that these practices will help their party – drives the success of programs. Ideally, party activists and leaders will take ownership of the initiatives and results of reform, developing a genuine commitment to reevaluate their existing operations and apply new practices.

Comparative Perspectives

NDI relies upon its global experience to provide comparative examples of party development and reform—particularly between countries with similar electoral structures or parties that faced comparable challenges. The Institute's network of party trainers and practitioners can also present a diverse range of party experiences. Providing part-

Having a core group advocating for NDI's assistance to address critical party needs can be an excellent way to gain greater support for activities. While the leadership is important, staff should also build relationships with activists on different party levels (local, provincial, etc.) or within specific organs like the research departments and training centers. They often have a more detailed understanding of how assistance will improve operations and can be more effective in appealing to party leaders.

THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

A useful tool to build on NDI's trust with partners is the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Once program strategy and activities have been determined, NDI often negotiates an MOU with each party. This document outlines the nature of the Institute's partnership with the parties, respective areas of responsibilities, and expected outcomes. A sensitively-drafted and properly-used MOU is an exceptionally useful tool for building and maintaining relationships with political parties.

An MOU lays out the agreements and obligations made between the parties and NDI. Its value is in clarifying this shared understanding and commitment to the program activities. The piece should be viewed by each partner as a goodwill gesture, not as a legally enforceable document that will expose the party to sanctions. Instead, it presents an opportunity for partner parties and NDI to pursue deeper interactions and more strategic relationships.

It is vitally important that the document does not become a negative or constricting instrument with legalistic undertones.

As such, it is important to consider at what point an MOU should be entered into. Since these documents are predicated on NDI having an established credibility and the parties' confidence, they should not be negotiated at the very start of our relationship with partners.

Also, 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 document should be as explicit as reasonable, it should not be legalistic. The language should be informal but very clear, and should allow for flexibility and changes in the ongoing relationship. Ideally, it will be entered into at a stage where a significant number of party leaders and activists know NDI well and can act as contact persons or liaisons.

NDI can take the initiative by providing a sample first draft of an MOU, but it is important that the party has a role in shaping the final document. A significant amount of time should be invested in the negotiation of the final version. In addition, publicizing the signing of an MOU must be entirely at the discretion of the party concerned. Moreover, MOUs should be written documents and not oral agreements. They are 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. However steps should be taken to avoid any potential conflicts with the national HQ. Indeed, MOUs at this level are probably highly desirable, and even necessary in the case of a decentralized party organisation.

CASE STUDY: COLOMBIA AND MEMORANDUMS OF UNDERSTANDING

NDI signed MOUs with six Colombian political parties in September 2005. Like most MOUs, it outlined the program's objectives, areas where the Institute would provide support, and the parties' responsibilities in implementing the workplan.

However, through the negotiations with NDI, the party presidents organically decided to compose a public declaration, committing their parties to democratic political reform, and various parties referenced the event on their websites and party bulletins.

In addition, the declaration informed the public of NDI's assistance. By establishing community awareness about the MOU as a key part of the agreement, the parties and NDI created a public enforcement mechanism to keep all participants accountable.

ners with these views can help them think through the benefits and disadvantages of a particular course of action and allow them to more carefully tailor operational changes to their specific needs.

Tailoring Assistance to Partner Needs

It is almost universally accepted that there is no single, definitive "right" way to organize a political party. Consequently, NDI tailors its assistance to each partner's individual needs, as well as to a country's overall political circumstances. Programs typically start by conducting a baseline assessment (covered on page 21) to discuss the parties' particular challenges and issues. Activities are also evaluated periodically to ensure that NDI is providing the most appropriate assistance for the partner's circumstances.

Guided Practice and Follow-On Assistance

Thomas Carothers has criticized democracy assistance providers for "workshop fatigue" among party partners: offering one-shot trainings without the sustained support necessary for a genuine partnership. NDI has found that assistance is more likely to bring about change if party members subsequently put the ideas and concepts into practice through specific projects designed to encourage reforms.

To facilitate these behavioral and organizational changes, NDI uses the concept of "guided practice," a learning-by-doing process whereby the Institute offers guidance to parties as they develop and put newly acquired ideas and techniques to use. NDI facilitates this process by providing information and ideas, coaching, structured feedback, and hands-on assistance. The Institute has also found that having in-country experts is an excellent asset to draw upon in guiding discussions about party reforms and operational changes.

Guided practice is built on the understanding that active participation and experiential learning are powerful ways to teach new skills and influence behaviors. As NDI supports the parties as they begin to take action, they are generally more confident and are less risk averse in considering reform.

Chapter Two

Program Areas for Political Party Development

NDI has used its approach to focus on four areas of political party development:

- Internal Operational and Structural Development
- Election Preparation and Accountability
- Political Parties in Parliament
- Legal Frameworks for Party and Electoral Operations

Each of these contributes to effective parties in unique and complementary ways. While funders and the parties themselves often focus on

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ACTIVITY AREAS IN OPERATIONAL AND STRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT

- Membership development and management – recruitment strategies, information management, database development
- Improving lines of communication and coordination between local, regional, and national party offices
- Outreach to the public and building relationships with civil society
- Policy making – Establishing procedures, gathering input from the public
- Party finance regulations and procedures

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election-related activities, it is important to embed these programs within a larger strategy of long-term, sustainable party development.

This strategy will also be affected by the political timeline/cycle in a country. Knowing when to switch from internal reforms to campaign activities to advice on legislative action is critical to fostering trust and tailoring assistance to partner needs.

OPERATIONAL AND STRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Under ideal circumstances, NDI would begin its party partnerships by working on basic structural development issues. While parties (and funders) typically focus on election preparation, effective party operations are the key to creating sustainable practices and a healthy party system.

This area of development encompasses the practices needed to have the party grow as an organization, such as establishing branches, policy making procedures, and membership management structures. NDI also helps parties develop channels of communication between

CASE STUDY: AZERBAIJAN POLICY WORKING GROUPS

Azerbaijan's democratic opposition parties have had difficulty in formulating coherent policies, shifting from personality-based to platform-based campaign operations, and collaborating with each other on legislative issues. To address this, NDI designed a program to assist the opposition parties in formulating joint policy plans during the lead-up to the 2003 presidential election. The program's objectives were to provide mid-level party activists with communication skills to enable effective coalition-building and to provide parties with tools to develop policy and strengthen internal party structures through the increased involvement of mid-level activists in developing policy agendas. To reach these goals, NDI brought together representatives from four opposition parties to form ten multiparty Policy Working Groups (PWGs).

Each PWG was composed of three activists from each party and was charged with developing positions on a particular policy area. These included economic reform, foreign relations, education, and social and healthcare issues. NDI held two-day training sessions with each group on drafting policies and platforms and on effective communication. Each team of three party representatives then worked out policy positions for their individual party. NDI facilitated bi-weekly meetings for each PWG, where the party teams would outline their recommendations to address these issues to each other and identify joint recommendations.

During the training sessions, many team members laid foundations for further collaboration with activists from other parties. For example, one PWG organized meetings with their leaders and began to create messages on the joint work of the four parties. They conducted their own survey within the four parties and helped to improve communication among the parties' leaders. Another group hosted a debate on a local television station with members from the government on economic development issues, a first of its kind in Azerbaijan. The Institute also hosted meetings between the heads of each PWG to allow for better comparison of work.

As a result of the program, participants enhanced their communication skills and also grew more willing to build coalitions. Working relationships between the parties improved dramatically, as did collaboration on common policy objectives. Mid-level activists became more involved in shaping party policy— some even took prominent roles in the election campaign based on the expertise they developed through the program. In addition, trainees also improved their policy development skills. Several began leading research projects and initiating legislative action on their issue areas. In addition, participants also requested that NDI conduct a follow-up program to include government representatives and local and international experts in issue-oriented policy discussions.

internal party organs (like in financial and branch-headquarters reporting), as well as between the party and the public. These "nuts and bolts" operations enable leaders and activists to continually reevaluate their operations, seek out input from the public, and develop more effective ways to respond to citizen demands.

NDI frequently works on structural development at multiple levels within the party. For example, the Institute can work with local activists on membership recruitment, while helping national leaders establish the systems to track member information. Effective communication and coordination between these different efforts are especially important to developing effective and sustainable practices.

Operational and structural development programs can also lay the foundation for election and legislative work. For example, membership and volunteer management is essential to mobilizing manpower during a campaign. Similarly, advancing legislative priorities and building the party's profile outside of an election help differentiate a party from its competitors.

ACTIVITY AREAS TO IMPROVE CAMPAIGNS

- Campaign planning and strategies
- Developing messages and platforms
- Media relations
- Public speaking, speechwriting, and debating
- Fundraising
- Establishing more effective candidate selection procedures

THE 30-DAY RULE

In the run-up to an election, parties are understandably focused on gaining an advantage over their opponents, and there is sometimes a danger that NDI will be pulled into intra- or inter-party wrangling. In response, the Institute has adopted a "30-Day Rule" to avoid the "cut and thrust" of election dynamics. This rule also helps NDI maintain its political neutrality and protects staff from charges of favoritism. The NED and USAID have also adopted similar guidelines.

The rule suspends any NDI party strengthening or campaign-related programming with political parties at least 30 days prior to an election. These activities include workshops, training seminars, and other activities that could be perceived as helping to enhance party competitiveness in the elections. Conducting campaign trainings, for example, may be perceived as NDI throwing its support behind one party immediately before polling day.

However, the rule does not apply to activities which foster constructive dialogue among parties and safeguard the legitimacy of an election. Pollwatcher trainings and Code of Conduct meetings, for example, facilitate the necessary conditions for free and fair elections and are not barred by the rule. NDI has also hosted multi-party debates, providing the public with more opportunities to gain insight on the candidates and the key electoral issues.

For additional information, please see the Parties team's 30-Day Rule Overview.

ELECTION PREPARATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

As elections approach, NDI shifts gears to provide campaign-related assistance. 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 open to assistance, and, importantly, most defensive about their behavior.

Parties are usually eager to take advantage of the

ACTIVITY AREAS TO SAFEGUARD ELECTIONS

- Pollwatching
- Hosting debates and public fora
- Facilitating a Code of Conduct

Institute's comparative perspective on effective campaign techniques in the run-up to Election Day. NDI can use these opportunities to help a party become more representative of public opinion and offer more meaningful political choices. This can include, for example, incorporating public opinion to form messages, as well as clearly

defining party platforms and election promises.

NDI's election-related party programming falls into two types of work. First, the Institute assists parties to establish the institutions and foster the practices to conduct effective election campaigns—supporting the capacity of each individual party to compete against the others. Activities can include training on fundraising, campaign strategy, and message development. Oftentimes, activities on these topics benefit from a single party training format, where leaders and activists can feel more comfortable discussing sensitive strategy and planning issues.

Second, NDI works to enhance and safeguard the transparency and accountability of the electoral process as a whole. Through party pollwatching programs, for example, the Institute helps parties train and strategic deploy pollwatching agents to ensure that their supporters can freely vote and the final results are accurate. In contrast to pollwatching conducted by NGOs or international observers, parties often have greater access to polling stations and the counting process. These activities can also encourage greater cooperation between parties.

Similarly, the Institute also facilitates the development of "Codes of Conduct" among political par-

CASE STUDY: MACEDONIA CODE OF CONDUCT

In the run-up to the 2006 Macedonia parliamentary elections, there was increasing concern about the possibility of violence, voter intimidation, and fraud carried out by political parties and individuals acting on their behalf.

In response, NDI launched a Code of Conduct initiative to establish common rules for campaign behavior. The Institute held initial meetings with the four major parties to explain the concept and gauge their interest in the project.

NDI then organized a series of meetings to work out the content and language of the Code among the parties. Former Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations Cedric Thornberry traveled to Skopje to assist with this process and build party support.

A billboard advertisement commissioned by NDI to promote public awareness of the Code of Conduct.

The public signing ceremony, with NDI-Macedonia Director Chris Henshaw and political party leaders.

After securing each parties' agreement, NDI hosted a public signing ceremony for the Code. Notably, the leaders of the two main parties, who had previously never been in the same room together, both appeared for the signing. In all, 36 parties signed NDI's Code of Conduct for Free and Fair Elections on June 13 in a widely televised signing ceremony held at the Parliamentarians' Club in Skopje.

Equally important, the signing raised public awareness of the Code. NDI, along with civic partner, Citizens Association MOST (MOST), launched a voter education campaign. The campaign—and peoples'

knowledge of the Code—reinforced the parties' commitment to uphold democratic values and practices during the campaign.

NDI published 240,000 brochures on the Code in daily and weekly newspapers and gave copies to several parties to distribute among their members and the general public. NDI also prepared a television advertisement, and the media regularly referenced the Code in its reports. In all, it became part of the public discourse of the election campaign.

For additional information on Codes of Conduct, please see this overview prepared by NDI's West Bank/Gaza team. Sample Codes can be found on our Intranet site.

ELEMENTS OF A CODE OF CONDUCT

- Inter-party negotiations to define the Code, and voluntary acceptance of its provisions.
- Public awareness of the Code.
- Some means of enforcement, either through media using it as a reference in their reporting, impartial monitoring, or multiparty negotiations.

ties. These establish ground rules for party behaviour during an election, and help mitigate electoral violence and promote public confidence in the credibility of the election itself.

ASSISTING POLITICAL PARTIES IN PARLIAMENT

In new and transitional democracies, parties often have little experience in organizing their parliamentary activities. They often lack services to train new MPs on their role in the legislature, establishing and managing a constituent office, and collaborating in a party caucus.

In response, NDI works with MPs on organizing themselves to operate effectively as a group within

ACTIVITY AREAS FOR PARTIES IN PARLIAMENT

- Role, rights, and responsibilities of the parties in opposition and government
- Party discipline and the role of the whip
- Managing inter-party relations and coalition building
- Party caucus decision-making and rules of procedure
- Constituent relations
- Communications between caucus members, party headquarters, and the public

the legislature. By working with caucuses on organization and legislative strategy, for example, the Institute can help these groups more effectively represent their party's interests and policies. For example, NDI has trained MPs in Kenya on negotiation skills, and worked with caucuses on strategy, rules of procedure, and policy research in Morocco and much of Eastern Europe. Other areas of work can include clarifying decision-making structures, improving discipline and group cohesion, and strategizing on the distribution of legislative resources.

The Institute also focuses on MP relations with several groups – constituents, the executive branch, party headquarters, and each other – which includes activities on coalition building, executive oversight, and conducting constituent outreach and services. For example, over the course of many years, the Romania team has worked with MPs on developing constituent offices, drafting two manuals through the course of this project.

In addition, many of NDI parties in parliament programs concentrate on "helping democracy deliver:" passing legislation and implementing policies that respond to the public's needs and positively affect their lives. Parties are in a solid position to influence the disbursement of state funds

while in the legislature, and can have a greater impact on the electorate. In addition, a party's ability to develop a credible record of consistent, effectively implemented policy initiatives can be a strong selling point during a campaign and greatly influences public perception of the party.

COMPARATIVE APPROACHES TO THE PARTY SYSTEM

Leaders in post-authoritarian political environments often seek to reform the system of electoral and political party laws. These rules have an integral effect on the structure and framework for political participation. Where appropriate, NDI can assist these efforts by providing comparative examples of legal regulations that encourage more open political participation or clearer channels of party responsibility and accountability to the public.

This can include examples of:

- *Electoral Laws* – This can include issues like legislative thresholds (the percentage of the vote that a party needs in order to have seats in parliament), the advantages and disadvantages of Proportional Representation versus First-Past-the-Post systems, and public funding.

- *Party Registration Regulations* – Some political systems require parties to demonstrate that they have offices across the nation, a certain number of members, or guaranteed funds.

- *Quotas* – Many political systems require parties to field a certain number of women or minority candidates. These can also be great ways to enhance their participation in the political process.

Changes to these rules are typically politically contentious, and staff need to carefully evaluate whether the changes proposed by party leaders would help or hurt wider democratic political participation. The Institute can work with party partners to clarify the policy options available and coordinate their legislative and public advocacy efforts.

In addition, the Parties team collaborated with Dr.

Ken Janda to produce a [research paper on different kinds of party law](#). Through the course of the project, Dr. Janda also developed a [database of party laws](#) from around the world.

CROSS-CUTTING AREAS OF ASSISTANCE

Many NDI activities focus specifically on the contributions that women and youth wings can make to their parties. This approach can cut across activities with parties on election strategy, in the legislature, or on their internal operations, and staff have constructed entire programs around increasing the participation of these groups within parties.

Women and youth often face special challenges to working and advancing within their parties, like perceptions of inexperience or a prevailing attitude that associates political leadership with older men. Buy-in by party officials is particularly important to overcoming these obstacles.

In addition, women and youth typically face very different problems within the party. For example, working to overcome perceptions of youth activists' inexperience will not help older women activists looking to advance within the party leadership. Activities therefore need to be tailored to the specific (and sometimes divergent) interests and needs that women and youth have.

Women's Participation

Women often face unique barriers to political participation, and increasing and enhancing the opportunities for their participation in parties is a key avenue to promoting women's role in politics more generally. Increased women's participation often has electoral benefits for the party as well, as they can be perceived as being more open and inclusive. NDI can play a key role in helping parties address internal barriers to women's participation as activists, candidates, and party officials.

While there are no hard rules about how to facilitate women's participation in program activities, NDI has found several methods which may be helpful:

1. Trainings should aim, where possible, to provide a setting for women activists to feel safe and comfortable about getting involved. For example, specific times can be set apart for work with women.

2. It is often helpful to get participants results-oriented (e.g. focused on the benefits they can bring to their party), rather than dealing with ideological or systemic issues. Focusing on practical targets will build critical skills and create the incentives for party leaders to support greater women's participation.

3. Seminar participants can be invited so as to create a gender balance reflective of the society at large. The argument that "the demography of the party participants should reflect the demography of voters targeted" can be crucial for convincing some party leaders to involve more women.

4. The gender composition of the training team needs to be carefully considered. Women trainers should be actively sought – particularly for countries where the promotion of women is a priority.

5. Active party leadership support is integral to these women's participation projects. With a clearer understanding of women's potential contributions to the party, party leaders can take more effective steps to open up leadership opportunities and decision-making positions for women.

There is of course a need to be sensitive to cultural barriers to women's participation, at the very least because too actively promoting their involvement in politics could undermine NDI's relations with key political actors. However, these concerns should be balanced against the need to confront fears or perceptions that it is inappropriate for women to be involved in politics.

Youth

Like women, youth typically face obstacles to deeper participation in political parties. Party leaders and the public frequently associate political acumen with age, and youth are often overlooked

Case Study: Women Political Leadership

Kenya emerged from almost 40 years of one-party rule in 1991. This signaled the potential for major change within Kenya's political system, and civil society, religious, and political groups began to mobilize for a more democratic and representative government.

However, women had largely been excluded from this democratization process, even though they represented over half the voting population. They were also under-represented in formal political institutions, with only 3.2 percent of parliamentarians being women. (Only five African countries had smaller percentages of women in their parliaments.)

	1992	1997
Women declaring candidacy	182	415
Women nominated by their parties	149	189
Women elected to office	51	87

> *"The Institute's support has contributed to the positive results we achieved in our party elections. 11 out of 31 elected National Executive Committee members were women."*
>
> ~ Lydia Mukhongo
>   Ford-Kenya Taita Branch Secretary

To address these issues, NDI initiated a three-year, three-phase program in 1995 to enhance Kenyan women's political participation. In the first phase, the Institute worked with a local partner to host seminars on cross-party women's collaboration. The second phase saw NDI assisting women candidates and their management teams to prepare for the 1997 Presidential and Parliamentary elections. Institute staff held a series of national-level trainings on campaign planning and strategy, and they invited African and international experts to share how women in similar political systems have increased their political profile within parties.

In the third phase, NDI extended the program down to the grassroots level to promote broad-based support for the women candidates. In local seminars, the Institute tailored discussions to address the problems specific to each to region. This included the social construction of gender and its effect on women's political participation; explaining the electoral and nomination process in Kenya; and leadership development.

The program increased women's representation in the Kenyan parliament, as well as women's political participation overall. Over 4000 women had participated in the training workshops. One attendee, Charity Kaluki Ngilu, placed fifth out of fifteen candidates running for president and now serves as the country's health minister.

Many participants continue to be active leaders in promoting legislative initiatives of critical importance to women, and have established groups such as the Friends of Esther and Deborah to further enhance women's participation.

Moreover, as the phase two national-level workshops were conducted, the participants and trainers noticed a pronounced need for assistance to young women. Based on the progress made in these workshops, NDI secured additional funding in 2002 to form a Young Women's Academy. The Institute works with young women—both inside and outside of parties—in seven regions to sensitize their peers on the importance of women's involvement in politics, particularly the electoral process. In addition, NDI is currently running women's programs with seven major political parties in Kenya.

Program participants from the Women's Secretariat of the Democratic Party, along with NDI trainers and staff.

in party decision making and for leadership positions.

However, parties need to engage youth for a variety of reasons. Their energy and motivation make them ideal activists and party supporters. Youth leaders also form the basis for the next generation of party leaders, although they can usually benefit from trainings cultivating their political skills and expertise. Finally, because they are less tied to patronage networks, young activists are a great vehicle for fostering party reform and introducing new practices.

NDI typically works on three areas in its youth in party programs:

1. Enhancing the organizational capacity and political skills of young party activists;

2. Assisting youth in advocating for more prominent roles through activities like trainings on negotiation and strategy. Quite often this is accomplished by building institutional organs – like youth wings – to sustain young activists' roles and party participation;

3. Working with party leaders to understand the roles youth can play in party operations and to expand the opportunities for them to take on leadership or decision-making positions.

These activities work on both the "demand" side of youth activism – enhancing youth skills – but also on the "supply" side by working with leaders to recognize youth contributions and take steps to more actively engage them.

In addition, the most successful youth programs have combined practical skills training with strategies to help youth secure leaders' recognition for the valuable contributions they make. Working with young activists on local level party operations can also be an easier way to gain leadership buy-in to the program.

Please see our *Overview of Youth Development Programs* for additional information.

Case Study: Romania Political Party Exchange Program (PPE)

Romania's 1996 elections brought democratic-minded politicians to power. However, by 1998 only eight percent of the public had confidence in parties, and a third of them thought the country should return to one-party rule. NDI determined that parties faced critical weaknesses in communication: they were ineffective in publicizing their efforts and achievements, as well as in drawing in public opinion to inform policy decisions.

Young party activists can be particularly effective at helping political parties perform these functions. However, in Romania, rigid structures, limited skills, and other constraints prevented them from playing this role. In response, NDI developed the PPE program to assist youth in meeting this challenge, enhancing their outreach and communications skills and helping parties to
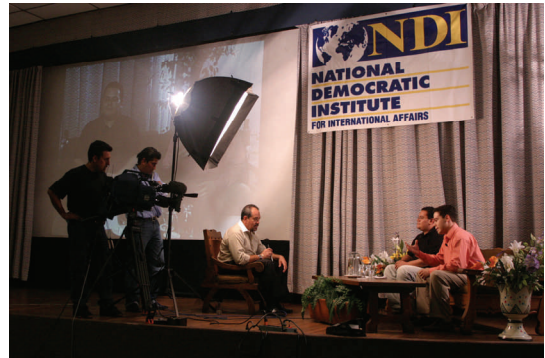
"[I applied to the program because] I knew [participants from the second study mission] before they went. When they returned, they were totally different. They knew how to run professional campaigns."

recognize the contributions that youth can make. Over the course of two years, NDI organized four study missions to the United States. During each two week-mission, 12 youth activists from multiple parties met with party, government, and NGO representatives; observed election and party building processes; and participated in interactive workshops to enhance their own skills. Like the LP, during the study mission, NDI assisted participants in preparing capacity-building projects for their parties. Upon return to Romania, the Institute provided participants and their party leaders with one-on-one consultations and supplemental training on media outreach, strategic planning, and negotiations to carry out their projects.

The PPE succeeded in establishing new practices to connect parties with the public. Of the 47 total participants, 40 implemented new training programs, and over half were promoted to more senior positions within their parties. Two participants even established a new system of caucuses and primaries to select candidates for the 2000 election. This project was formally endorsed by the party leadership and was the most open and transparent candidate selection process in Romania at the time.

CASE STUDY: LAC LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Latin American countries enjoy a tradition of some of the oldest and most sophisticated political parties in the world. In recent years, however, public opinion polls have reflected a growing "crisis of confidence" in parties. To respond to this, in 1995 NDI and the Chilean Ministry of the Presidency brought together senior political party leaders from 14 countries to discuss common challenges throughout the hemisphere and to recommend initiatives for party reform and renewal. Based on the recommendations from participants, NDI developed a long-term regional initiative, the Political Leadership Program (LP), to promote political party reform and renewal and foster relations among parties in the hemisphere. In implementing the LP, NDI adopted a region-wide approach to foster the exchange of experiences and best practices among emerging political leaders from different

LP participants practicing their skills in a mock interview.

countries and to achieve the best impact with limited available funding for single-country party work.

The LP is conducted annually and begins with an intensive, week-long leadership development seminar focused on political leadership techniques, skill-building, negotiation, strategic planning, outreach to new sectors and communication. Each participant develops a proposal to implement a party strengthening program over the following year. In turn, NDI provides materials and strategic advice to assist participants and also facilitates a mentorship program in which youth are paired with party leaders to bolster party leadership buy-in for youth activities. To date, the LP has facilitated 255 reform projects within 49 parties across the political spectrum from 10 countries in Latin America (Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru and Venezuela).

"The LP seminar is like finding one of those books that has everything you ever wanted to learn but nobody had the decency to tell you of its existence."

NDI identified several lessons learned in implementing the LP program in Latin America and simultaneously developed innovative program ideas:

Mentoring as a Way to Promote Buy-In from Party Leaders

Mentoring relationships were initiated in the LP program to bolster leaders buy-in regarding parties participating in the LP. Mentors have played key roles in building internal party support for participant projects and participants have been able to draw upon their relationships with their mentors to secure higher positions within their party. NDI learned that the LP program was a successful way for youth to apply the skills imparted by NDI and to showcase their capabilities. This in turn allowed other party activists and leaders to observe the benefits of involving youth, leading to youth advancement within parties. Securing leadership buy-in for youth activities is essential to program effectiveness in order to prepare party leaders to work with youth in innovative ways.

Learning by Doing

NDI found that it was more beneficial to provide support and training over the long-term instead of over the short-term. This way, NDI was able to monitor the progress of emerging leaders and provide assistance as problems or questions arose in the development of their projects.

Hosting Trainings in the Region

NDI moved the LP program from Washington, DC to Latin America to become more cost-efficient.

ILLUSTRATIVE LEADERSHIP PROGRAM RESULTS

- Number promoted due to LP participation: 58 (26%)
- Number elected to local office: 14 (6%)
- Number elected to National Congress: 12 (5%)
- Number selected for government posts: 25 (11%)

Chapter Three

Strategic Issues

Developing a comprehensive program strategy is the first and key step to putting NDI's approach to party programming in action. This can often be quite challenging. An effective strategy must be tailored to a country's political environment and our party partners' needs. Issues like the election cycle, the ability for parties to absorb assistance, and the Institute's relationship with the host government also can affect your strategy.

A carefully crafted strategy will facilitate in building a program's individual activities, incorporate new or subsequent funding, and allow you to better manage unexpected political changes.

This chapter will help you work through some of the major strategic issues encountered by NDI programs, including:

- *Strategic Vision for Party Assistance*: What are the best ways for NDI to engage with parties and the political context to promote more democratic practices?
- *Partner Selection*: How does NDI decide which parties to work with?
- *Measurement and Evaluation*: How does the Institute measure the success or failure of its

programs? How can programs be built with evaluation in mind?

- *Resources*: How can we effectively employ limited resources to have a significant impact with our partner parties?
- *Sustainability*: How can NDI ensure that its impact will be maintained by and be spread throughout the party, particularly after NDI has ended its programming?
- *Structure and Focus*: At what level within the parties should we conduct programming (e.g. local branches, national leaders, multi-country activities)? How will this shape the nature and framework for our activities?

The answers to these questions can help form the strategic foundation for your program. Be sure to reassess them periodically as the political and funding environments change.

CRITERIA FOR SELECTING POLITICAL PARTY PARTNERS

In following the multipartisan approach, NDI attempts to work with a range of parties. However, the Institute rarely partners – and in certain cases should not work – with *all* parties in a country,

particularly those that espouse, for example, non-democratic values.

Instead, staff should outline specific and clearly detailed criteria separating those parties that are eligible for assistance from those that are not. At a minimum, partner parties should be:

1. *Nonviolent* – They should not have ties to armed militias.
2. *Viable* and *Relevant* – They should be able to compete in elections, sustain themselves independently, and have a significant impact or influence on the political system.
3. *Democratic* – They support open political competition and public input to the government.

Naturally, country teams will want to consider additional factors to develop clear justifications for selecting partners or possibly denying assistance. NDI often consults widely with analysts, practitioners, and funding organizations to obtain their impressions of the parties and determine which ones are eligible for Institute assistance.

In addition, these criteria should be periodically reevaluated, especially if there is a significant change to the political landscape. Staff may want

to reconsider their list of partner parties if ineligible parties adopt new practices or gain significant electoral support, or if new parties emerge.

Exceptions to Assistance Criteria

Occasionally, a party will meet many of the criteria for assistance, but there are compelling reasons for NDI to withhold assistance from them. For example, extremist parties may have democratic internal procedures or significant public support, but advocate policies that would pose a threat to or endanger certain minorities or ethnicities.

Alternatively, a party may not meet NDI's selection standards, but there may nevertheless be political or programmatic justifications for working with them. In several Middle Eastern and Eurasian countries, for instance, non-democratic parties dominate the political system. Refusing to

provide them with assistance would limit the Institute's ability to work with parties that do meet our criteria. In some cases, this could jeopardize NDI's work with civic and legislative partners, or the Institute may be barred from working in the country altogether.

In both these cases, NDI must consider how the participation or absence of a particular party would affect its objectives. At base, 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. This could be informal and might expressly exclude any kind of formal partnership.

If staff decide to work with a party that would normally not be eligible for assistance, they need to delineate clear justifications for doing so. These exceptions should only be made under special circumstances, and funding agencies often have additional rules and procedures.

In certain cases, parties may also refuse NDI assistance. In those circumstances, staff should keep channels of communication open to those parties.

Tiers

The tiered approach is often used in countries where a large number of parties (dozens, sometimes even hundreds) meet NDI's criteria. In those situations, working with all the viable parties would only have limited impact and could become a prohibitive drain on resources. Using multiparty forums or trainings can overcome some of these issues, but may prevent a deeper engagement on sensitive topics like campaign planning or legislative strategy.

Staff have often turned to a tiered approach to meet these challenges. NDI divides the parties into groups based on specific criteria. These can include:

1. The parties' performance in the last election (e.g. meeting a specific electoral threshold);
2. The size of their representation in the legislature (e.g. any parties with at least five MPs);
3. Their geographic penetration (Do they have offices or support in every province?)

The Institute still provides training on similar topics to each of the parties, but the level of NDI's engagement depends on the tiers. The Institute works closely with Tier 1 parties, tailoring assistance to their particular political circumstances. Any reforms they adopt usually have a large impact on the democratic space and development of the country.

For lower tier parties, NDI provides less comprehensive assistance. This can include individual consultations and general multiparty discussion

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TAILORING PARTNER SELECTION

Post-conflict and transitional environments can make it difficult to apply clear selection criteria. For example, certain factions within a party may have a violent past, but the wider party supports democratic values.

Your team may want to consider the following questions when determining which parties to work with:

- 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 (e.g. reform-minded individuals within a problematic party)?

- 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? For example, in immediate post-apartheid South Africa, NDI did not work with parties which had been part of the previous government.

Tier	Types of Parties	Types of Assistance
1	The largest, most powerful parties, as identified through legislative strength, finances, or national presence. Typically around 2-5 parties.	• Close consultations with leaders and activists • Party-specific trainings • Follow-on consultations • Directed projects • Distribution of NDI resources and training materials
2	Still significant political actors, but usually holding only a few seats in the legislature or capturing a small share of votes in an election. Typically around 3-6 parties.	• Trainings set in small multiparty groups • Some follow-on and consultation with party leaders • Distribution of NDI resources and training materials
3	Fairly minor political players, often focused on specific regions or groups. No seats within legislature, little electoral success.	• General meetings and roundtables on basic party building issues • Seminars on the party/electoral system • Distribution of NDI resources and training materials

forums. As with the partner selection criteria, staff should periodically reevaluate the tiered structure to determine if any parties are eligible for deeper assistance.

THE PURPOSE AND PROCESS OF BASELINE ASSESSMENTS

The Institute often conducts a baseline assessment of the parties, which can serve several important functions:

1. Identifying appropriate partners for assistance,

2. Providing information for program and activity design, by delineating party strengths and weaknesses,

3. Assist in monitoring and evaluation by establishing the initial conditions and benchmarks against which assistance can be measured,

4. Fostering constructive relationships with the parties concerned.

Assessments are not simply questionnaires, and NDI has found that sending around lists of ques-

tions rarely gets the information that is needed to effectively design programs and achieve other assessment goals. Rather, they should be centered on participatory dialogue. For example, NDI's *Guide to Conducting a Political Party Baseline Assessment* contains general questions and waypoints for a discussion. It is most effective when used to organize interviews and meetings with party leaders and activists, rather than being handed out for a written response.

Similarly, the parties should be involved in deliberating on and discussing their assistance needs. Staff can also talk with local level leaders and activists to gain a deeper and more detailed picture of the party. You may also find it useful to speak with youth and women's wings or with the party's training institute and policy department. The process can help all concerned form a mutual un-

Assessments are not simply questionnaires, but opportunities for participatory dialogue. Ideally, the baseline assessment process becomes that of a self-assessment by the party, where leaders and activists reflect on their situation and needs.

derstanding of where the party's structure, interests, and developmental needs.

In addition, interviews with people outside the party – journalists, academics, civic leaders, businesspeople and labor leaders – can provide a well-rounded perspective of the parties. These individuals can help verify assessments and ensure both a depth of understanding and an honest set of conclusions.

Ideally, the baseline assessment process becomes that of a self-assessment by the party, where leaders and activists reflect on their situation and needs. When done systematically and purposefully, the result can be an honest, fact-based appraisal of a party's preparation to receive assistance and participate in NDI projects, serving as a critical tool in program design and evaluation.

BUILDING ONGOING EVALUATION INTO THE PROGRAM

Like any institution, NDI can only grow and develop better practices if it has a clear picture of which techniques work and which ones do not. An increasing number of political development organizations are working with parties, and fun-

ders are looking for demonstrated success to decide to whom to provide funds. The Institute must incorporate monitoring and evaluation (M&E) strategies, plans, and tools from the very start of program design to continually and effectively assess the results of party work.

A baseline assessment can help staff develop a picture of a party's "starting conditions." But a continuous evaluation process needs to be built into a program in order to capture party change and the impact of NDI's activities. Programs are

usually most effective when M&E forms the first step of program design, rather than the last.

By illuminating strengths and weaknesses, these periodic measurements help promote continual programmatic improvement by assisting program planners and implementers with decision making. The results help determine if activities are working, if they are still practical and pertinent, and if the program merits future resources.

Feeding M&E Back into the Program

Regular self-evaluation is a critical element of effective programs, but it can only function if the results of M&E are continuously fed back into the activities and general strategy. Program managers and implementers should design clear plans to accomplish this, and for practical purposes, this should be done immediately at the beginning of any program. M&E is easiest and most effective when designed as an integral day-to-day component of a program.

Also, be mindful of changes to the operating environment and any assumptions which your program is based on: they may require a rethinking of objectives, activities, and possibly even the overall program strategy.

Getting Partners Involved

Ideally, staff members will not take total responsibility for assessing a program. Party partners and program participants can and should be involved in the process.

Institute staff should work with partners to help them establish a system to assess themselves and

MONITORING PROCESSES

The actual monitoring process can be as simple as talking with activity participants and providing evaluation forms for them to fill out. Between 1-6 months after an event, conduct interviews with selected participants to see how they have used the trainings, and collect anecdotes for your reports. Even in this simple model, however, it is important for NDI to collect not only participants' **reactions** to a training, but also actual **demonstrations** of the Institute's impact on their practices.

Other approaches can include:

- **Quantitative:** Track the number of training sessions conducted, participants attending, consultations held, or materials distributed. Note that these are measurements are much stronger when your team has a baseline to compare the numbers against.

- **Outputs:** Collect any materials created by the parties as a result of activities. This can include newsletters, citizen questionnaires, policy documents, meeting minutes, and membership recruitment forms.

- **Dialogue:** Collect participants' testimonials using focus groups or informant interviews. Discuss the direction and usefulness of the program with party leadership. Ask participants of each study mission or special program to prepare a report on lessons learned and plans on implementing the best ideas.

- **Outside Sources:** Gather media reports related to program activities and results. Discuss the program's impact with other local and international organizations.

their accomplishments periodically. For example, this could include 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 used to measure impact.

> *M&E is easiest and most effective when designed as an integral day-to-day component of a program.*

BALANCING PRINCIPLES AND RESOURCES

Following NDI's partner selection criteria can pose special problems for programming. As mentioned, dozens or even hundreds of legally registered parties may fit our minimum standards and need assistance in basic organizing, communication and planning skills. A major challenge in these situations is to utilize NDI's limited resources in such a way as to maximize our impact on democratic development.

Tiered approaches, as described earlier, can allow the Institute to focus resources on specific, significant parties, while meeting the need for multipartisanship. Other techniques include pilot projects or the establishment of party resource centers.

Pilot Projects

Strengthening grassroots capacity – through constituency office development, municipal election preparation, or local level outreach – is a great way to help parties respond to public concerns, increase political participation, and build a stronger electoral base. Except in the smallest countries, however, this requires a lot of money, time, and personnel, and funders often do not have the resources to support local party building on a national scale.

Establishing pilot projects is especially useful here. Under this approach, the Institute would still work with all our partners, but only within a few specific localities. That way, staff can ensure that activities will have an impact, without spreading the program too thinly. The districts or provinces that NDI will work in should be selected based on clear criteria and a solid understanding of the political environment.

Successful pilot programs can be used to build support within the party for more widespread changes. Party activists can point to improved operations in targeted branches to demonstrate the effectiveness of our work. Because of their limited scope, these activities are also less likely to face internal party resistance. They can also be an excellent way to convince skeptical party leaders to support NDI initiatives.

In addition, pilots can often serve as a basis to press funders for additional resources to expand the activities to other districts.

Resource Centers

Programs in Afghanistan, Sierra Leone, and the DRC have established party resource centers, which have increased the geographic reach of NDI's programs. These centers generally serve three functions:

1. A "library" role, being a central repository for party development documents and resources. This is especially helpful for countries with limited funding, equipment, and office space for parties.
2. Providing office space and equipment for parties to meet and strategize on their campaigns and operations. (This is particularly useful for smaller parties)
3. Using the center(s) to host trainings for party participants.

> *"The value of a party resource center in a post-conflict, under resourced environment cannot be overstated. The most significant result is that we were able to keep dialogue and communication alive between parties, the CEC [Central Election Commission], the government and the international community."*
>
> ~ Vandetta Sawyer,
>   NDI-Sierra Leone

Case Study: Pakistan Pilot Programs

By 2004 under President Perez Musharraf, the national government had centralized control of local governments. Political parties were prohibited from competing in local elections and had little reason to maintain connections to the grassroots public.

NDI-Pakistan received funding from the UK Department for International Development (DFID) to help parties remain engaged on the local level. Launched in 2004, the program has assisted parties to improve their citizen outreach, discuss policy options, and work with federal, district and provincial authorities to create solutions.

The project was launched as a pilot in three districts that were chosen based on clear criteria. For example, the Khairpur district had clear infrastructural and transpor-

> *"NDI has brought together political groups who didn't even want to see each others' faces. Now we all agree to conduct combined activities to address the issues of citizens and strengthen inter-party relations."*

tation problems on which the parties could come to a consensus. One district in Punjab had rural-urban political tensions that reflected broader issues in local politics. Each district had a high level of political activism, necessary to develop connections between the parties and the public.

The team first convened "District Steering Committees" (DSC) composed of local party representatives. The Institute held political skills workshops for the DSCs with assistance from the Center for Civic Education (CCE), a local partner NGO. They also prepared a variety of training materials on party building, campaigning, branch management, leadership, local government structures, and negotiations.

CCE and NDI then hosted public fora on specific policy questions, like sanitation and public safety. Hundreds of people participated, including civil society activists, lawyers, and government officials. The DSCs could directly hear citizen concerns and suggestions to resolve the local issues.

Training participants engaging in a role playing exercise on negotiation skills.

NDI-Pakistan followed the fora by working with DSCs to develop consensus-based solutions and present them to district, provincial, and even federal officials.

Through these efforts, the parties improved the quality of the drinking water in one district, while successfully reducing sectarian violence in another. These tangible benefits also allowed them to increase their profile at the grassroots level.

Consensus approach was also important for their future ability to work as a team of key-players in the political process. To further strengthen relations between the party leaders, NDI held stakeholders meetings with national leaders from the four major parties.

Due to NDI-Pakistan's success in the pilot districts, DFID provided additional funding for the program, enough to expand it to ten districts total. Party leaders were also impressed with the results, and the pilot demonstrated how more participatory or representative operations can have a positive impact on party support.

Participants analyzing their party's strengths and weaknesses.

The centers can also help to reduce inter-party tensions by serving as a neutral space where parties can discuss and negotiate political issues. However, resource centers can be rather expensive, particularly in countries with security concerns. Careful consideration must be given to the "end goals" of a resource center: what to do with them once the program is completed.

- Are the rental/lease terms aligned with our program timeline?
- What happens to the center's equipment when it closes?
- Will the resource centers be turned over to and managed by another organization after NDI completes its program?
- Are there credible partners that can take over, whether local CSOs, a consortium of funders, or international NGOs?

For additional information on resource centers, please consult our overview of resource center considerations.

FOCUS: LOCAL, PROVINCIAL, AND NATIONAL LEVELS

It can often be tempting to work exclusively with national political party leaders. They are the ones best placed and responsible for approving and enacting many procedural and policy changes.

However, working only at the national headquarters is usually counterproductive to building widespread and effective party operations. In most emerging democracies the size of the headquarters operation is quite modest, and some parties can depend heavily on local-level volunteers and members to manage their operations. Having national leaders announce new procedures without giving local staff the skills to implement them typically results in the new procedures being dropped.

As a result, training that is confined to the national level is not as effective as bringing the message to a wider audience in the regions. NDI will generally work with multiple levels of a party's organization. This grassroots focus helps to channel local

citizen concerns to the national policy agenda, encourage broader political participation, spur party reforms, and train a wider base of party leaders.

There is no uniform set of guidelines to decide where in the party structure assistance should be concentrated, and how other organs can be brought in. Rather, as an institution, NDI depends on its field staff's judgements and political sense to finding the right mix of activities on the national, regional and local levels. Some points to consider are:

- Available funding (large scale regional and local programming tends to be more expensive, although tiered approaches and pilot programs can help address this).
- The amount of political sophistication and capability at the various levels.
- The amount of party activist interest at each level.
- Potential logistical difficulties, like travel and communications.

Naturally, the balance of activities among party national, regional and local offices should be continually re-evaluated, especially when it comes time to develop new program proposals and assess the NDI's overall strategy and direction within a country.

Working on Different Levels and with National Leaders

Concentrating on the local level can also help circumvent a lack of support by certain national leaders in a similar way to pilot programs. Where party leadership is indifferent or doubtful of NDI's activities or incapable of spreading training and skills to other party organs, moving the focus to lower levels of the party structure has proven very successful.

However, it is important to maintain clear lines of communication to keep party leaders in the loop on program decisions and manage expectations. At the very least, party leaders need to buy into the program concepts and can be helpful in clearing bureaucratic hurdles among other party units.

In addition, trained activists 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, and there should be regular contact with party headquarters to keep them informed of activities and results. Staff should also emphasize the benefits that training local activists will have for the party more generally.

Even when working on the regional or local level, your team may want to provide some complementary support to national leaders. For example, assisting local branches on issues like reporting or membership development will generate new information that may need to be coordinated at the party headquarters. Your program may need to provide some training so that national level officials are prepared to absorb and use this information.

FOCUS: REGIONAL PROGRAMS

In some cases, it can be helpful for NDI to forego its regular, country-specific focus and instead work with parties from several countries within a region. These regional programs can be great vehicles for:

1. Encouraging cross-border networks of party activists;
2. Sharing lessons learned and best practices;
3. Working in a particular country even when funds are not available.

These kinds of projects are particularly useful in places with common historical, linguistic, and political circumstances. The participants' perspectives often lead to better discussions and brainstorming of solutions to party concerns.

However, regional programs can also be a challenge to implement. Information and personnel are usually spread out in several different field offices, requiring more time and resources be devoted to coordination. Also, NDI sometimes uses these activities to engage parties in countries where we do not have a permanent office, which can create logistics challenges. It is important to carefully weigh these resource and personnel requirements against the benefits that this approach will bring.

See the LAC Leadership Program case study on page 17 for more on regional programs.

> **REGIONAL PROGRAMS ALLOW NDI TO**:
>
> - Stay engaged in places where funding is less available
> - Be more flexible in selecting partners to work with
> - Augment the resources available to in-country programs

INTERNAL CAPACITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

NDI's programs aim to enhance internal party capacity over the long-term—creating a sustainable culture of democratic politics that persists after the Institute has left. Guided practice and follow-on assistance can certainly help parties build these sustainable operations and pass skills down to new members and activists. You may also want to consider the following approaches:

Training of Trainers (TOT)
Under a TOT approach, NDI works with a group of key party members to enhance their political skills and knowledge of adult education techniques. This core group of "Master Trainers" then fans out to provide "step down" trainings and impart their political skills to other activists, typically at the regional or branch level.

This method allows experience to be passed on to in-country trainers that can continue building capacity and transfer skills to the wider party membership in a relatively short period of time. A key issue is to select the right people as Master Trainers: those with a solid commitment to a political party and to working in democratic politics. Otherwise, participants may use the training to enhance their personal career prospects, rather than also contributing to their party's development.

NDI has frequently used the TOT method to assist parties in preparing for large-scale mobilization work, like GOTV or pollwatching. The approach is particularly well-suited to these grassroots party building activities, as activists need to quickly and widely disseminate skills without large financial and personnel costs.

Training Institutes

Parties often establish internal training institutes to continuously identify, develop, and spread lessons learned and best practices. These bodies do require some investment of party time and resources to initiate and maintain. However, the benefits of having an institutional organ devoted to training make the effort worthwhile. They spread capacity-building skills throughout a party and are often tasked with collecting and developing new operational methods. An institute can also be a great, sustainable location to compile resources and information on party best practices.

Training institute programs most often begin by focusing on basic organizational and campaign skills. However, it is important that they move progressively towards more advanced and strategic activities as soon as practicable, including developing a full skills-building curriculum and adult education techniques.

Chapter Four

Principal Techniques for Party Development Programs

Over its decades of experience, NDI has developed a range of techniques to engage political parties in development programs. Particularly after opening field offices in the 1990s, the Institute has focused on on-the-ground assistance programs and longer-term, sustained activities.

Many of these methodologies were created to address the particular political contexts of partner parties, along with the challenge of meeting funder requirements with available resources. Carefully employing these techniques will maximize the impact of NDI's work, particularly by fostering sustainable and practical changes that parties can use to evaluate their own operations.

TRAINING SEMINARS

Training seminars and workshops have formed the foundation for many of NDI's past party programs. However, the Institute has increasingly moved away from single, discrete seminars, as these tend to have only a limited, short-term impact on party operations. Without sustained engagement, parties quickly revert to old practices rather than see reforms through. In response, staff have embedded training seminars within a wider program encompassing follow-on work, guided practice programs, and other techniques detailed later on.

Nevertheless, seminars remain an important part of NDI programs, with a number of operational questions to consider:

Who to Work with?
Make sure your team is targeting the right people within a party for training. Oftentimes, working with grassroots activists can have a greater impact on party practice than conducting trainings at the national headquarters.

Also, seminars can take a good amount of time, so be sure to take the impact on participants' schedules into consideration. For example, when working with women, some NDI programs have opted for providing several short trainings rather than one long, multi-day seminar, since women often face additional time constraints because of their responsibilities at home or with children.

Single Party or Multiparty?
A key decision is whether meetings should be held in a multiparty or single party format. The

Institute has found that multiparty settings facilitate confidence building and trust between parties. This is particularly important for Code of Conduct or coalition building activities, which seek to enhance party cooperation. This can also help reinforce NDI's position that it provides equitable assistance to all parties.

However, parties will naturally be reluctant to discuss more sensitive topics – like campaign or legislative strategies – in front of their competitors. In those situations, it is more productive to work with parties individually. This allows participants to be more open about their party's strengths, weaknesses, and plans, which lead to deeper discussions and better opportunities for providing detailed advice. Recognizing the strengths and weaknesses of these two approaches – and the situations in which they may or may not be appropriate – is essential to building effective programs and enhancing party capacity.

Outside Expertise

In many cases, international experts are called in to share their knowledge and opinions with participants. Their experience can often lend added credibility or weight to the activity, especially if their party dealt with similar political circumstances.

FOLLOW-UP AND GUIDED PRACTICE

The most effective seminars not only offer a forum to discuss and share ideas, but also allow participants to apply the information received. NDI staff have added breakout sessions and simulations to allow participants to immediately practice their new skills.

However, while this format is useful, participants often need sustained – and ideally, real-world – opportunities to fully employ and incorporate their new skills into their party's operations. NDI can help foster these opportunities by encouraging party leaders to provide those opportunities, providing follow-on events for participants to brush up on skills, and offer consultations and advice to address particular issues. These meetings can also be useful for gathering information for program

evaluation.

The Institute has also worked intensively with a small group of party activists on long-term, "guided projects." Lasting anywhere from several months to a year, NDI begins these programs by hosting seminars to improve political skills like communications and negotiations. Building on these trainings, participants then design projects to address critical issues in their party's operations or structure. The Institute – either by itself or through expert trainers – maintains an advisory and "hand holding" role, providing in-depth advice and resources to help participants in strategic planning. The LAC Leadership Program described on page 17 is a notable example of this kind of approach.

These guided projects are an excellent vehicle for instilling better practices among party activists and subsequently effecting wider reform. It is very important to pick the right participants, as the program – and the impact it will have on the party more generally – largely depends on their initiative, creativity, and skills.

CONSULTATIONS AND WORKING GROUPS

Obtaining party leadership buy-in is integral to getting institutional support for NDI's activities and fostering sustainable changes in operations. This support is usually gained through personal consultations with party leaders in order to explain program objectives, activities, and expected results.

Some programs have opted to establish all-party working groups of senior leaders instead of single party consultations. Participants offer advice on the overall direction of the program and act as liaisons for their respective parties. These groups can be excellent fora for demonstrating NDI's neutrality, building trust in the program, and providing key political actors with an opportunity discuss the broad themes of the activities.

In addition, on some occasions, modest programs can be carried out solely through consultations with officials at party headquarters. Strategic ad-

vice can be given to a small group of key personnel who in turn take action at other levels in the party. Informal talks can be especially useful in difficult political environments, particularly when it may not be appropriate or possible for party leaders to attend formal training sessions.

FACILITATION, MEDIATION, AND HOSTING EVENTS

NDI will often use its position as a neutral and outside partner to host dialogue within a particular party (between different party organs, for example), between parties, and between parties and the public. These activities are often very useful in generating greater buy-in to program objectives, widening the scope of engagement within a party, and fostering communication.

Within a Party

Arranging and hosting internal dialogue has been an effective vehicle for building linkages between party leaders, MPs, branches, and members.

This kind of activity can be particularly helpful when parties are considering significant internal reforms in their decision making process and grassroots engagement. Facilitating internal discussions can help ease the initial steps and difficulties that parties face in undertaking these changes.

It can also be useful to draw upon the Institute's network of experts. NDI-Kosovo, for example, paired each main party with a long-term consultant whose party had faced similar challenges. With NDI support, these individuals helped the parties devise solutions and strategies to meet these problems.

Multiparty Meetings

NDI has found that multiparty meetings can be very useful in reducing tensions in post-conflict environments or during elections. Some Code of Conduct programs, for example, have established fora where parties can discuss possible violations of the Code and air grievances. These meetings must be carefully mediated to avoid harming both NDI-party and inter-party relations.

The Institute has also fostered dialogue and collaboration among parties on issues of common concern. This can include things like changes to the party law, financial disclosure guidelines, or even the entire electoral system. In these situations, parties can have a shared interest in developing a set of common positions, and advocating for those points to the electoral commission or other relevant body. For example, NDI convened a multiparty forum in Morocco to clarify their understanding and positions on the King's initiative to reform the political party law.

Party-Citizen Dialogue

Public events generally serve two purposes for parties: gathering information and opinions from the public, and publicizing their messages and policy positions. During elections, these events can include candidate fora and debates. Outside the election cycle, parties can use these opportunities to test opinion on public concerns and form policy positions.

NDI can support these initiatives in a variety of ways. First, of course, is setting up and hosting the gatherings themselves. In addition, the Institute will usually provide preparatory trainings for participants (such as in public speaking or in clarifying policy stances), and staff can also moderate discussions.

Furthermore, for both multiparty meetings and public events, a critical sensitivity is the media. While there may be some incentive in publicizing these events as widely as possible, live media may prompt participants to avoid speaking openly and candidly. Also, there is the danger of "spoilers," individuals who will use a public forum as a platform to inflame the political situation. This can be especially problematic if NDI is working in a post-conflict environment or where there have been incidents of political and electoral violence. In the end, these political sensitivities need to be carefully balanced against the benefits that publicity can provide, and all participants should be comfortable with the presence and nature of the media coverage.

STUDY MISSIONS

NDI has conducted study missions for party activists from dozens of countries. While the Institute concentrates on in-country activities, a well-planned, strategically relevant mission can be a useful and integral part of party programming.

The main benefit of study missions is in getting participants out of their normal political environment and into a neutral setting. By removing them from their daily responsibilities, they can have more open discussions and be exposed to different methods for tackling political challenges.

As such, the Institute has used study missions for three general purposes:

1. *Exposure to Different Operations*

CASE STUDY: MACEDONIAN AND CROATIAN STUDY MISSION TO N. 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.

Study missions allow politicians and party officials to interact with their counterparts in countries who have faced similar challenges. Ideally, this leads to the development of innovative solutions to the participants' political challenges. At the same time, participants form vital personal bonds with each other and their foreign counterparts.

2. *Neutral Settings for Discussion*
In countries where the governments severely restrict political space, study missions can help participants feel more comfortable about interacting and speaking openly. In Guinea, NDI hosted two study missions to Morocco and Ireland (in 1999 and 2000, respectively) to foster dialogue and open space for cooperation among eight high-level party leaders.

3. *Consolidating Democratic Practices*
Talking about party operations in another country is helpful, but actually seeing them in practice – or even better, trying them out – typically makes a stronger impact on participants.

DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLICATIONS

As part of its party programs, NDI often drafts manuals to reinforce guided practice or serve as references for party activists. The documents can even form the core focus of the Institute's program, as in party pollwatching activities.

In general, manuals and handbooks should be tailored to address a country's specific electoral and political environment. Party activists also benefit from having examples of party operations in other countries to determine best practices and demonstrate how proposed operational reforms can enhance their party.

More recently, NDI has produced a variety of in-depth research on comparative political systems, corruption and party finance, and internal party organization. These more academic pieces draw upon the Institute's global expertise and experience, and serve as solid resources and tools to gain party and funder support.

For example, the Southern and East Africa team published two pieces on corruption and political funding as part of the African Political Party Finance Initiative, while the Governance team examined incentives and disincentives for anti-poverty reform in Bolivia and Peru. In addition to supporting party building or policy making activities, these documents can be

CASE STUDY: PERU PRO-POOR POLICY REFORM PROGRAM

After the 2001 elections, NDI found that Peruvian voters were disappointed with their parties' delivery of pro-poor legislation. To understand why—and help parties develop solutions—NDI conducted a wide-ranging research project analyzing how anti-poverty policies are enacted and maintained.

Securing funding from DFID, the Institute combined desk research and interviews with key political leaders to analyze the problem. NDI drew upon its relationships with all the major political parties, Congress, and leading civic organizations to gather data, as well as information that emerged from the Institute's pilot projects in the country.

The Institute's report found that Peru's overall political system created several disincentives to supporting economic reform. Public expectations about the government's ability to reduce poverty were very high, and the parties felt that the poverty issue was largely being driven by the international donor community. Consequently, politicians had few incentives from their core constituencies to pursue anti-poverty legislation. As a result, the parties have been unable to organize and coordinate policy responses to this challenge, and the public "continues to view parties as an unnecessary vehicle for 'real' reform."

NDI convened 26 forums to discuss the study's results with 14 Peruvian parties and develop ways to circumvent these institutional obstacles. The Institute also worked with UNICEF and local NGOs to host additional meetings, develop an internet course on "Poverty and Political Parties," and broadcast radio programs on the subject.

Representatives from all the participating parties commented that the forums were the first time they had conducted activities that focused on a specific policy issue. Party members subsequently demanded greater inclusion in the policy alleviation debate.

used as a tool to leverage parties to adopt reforms.

The Institute frequently consults with outside researchers, academics, and politicians when developing these types of materials. For example, in November 2005, the Political Parties Team released a series of research papers – *Political Parties and Democracy in Theoretical and Practical Perspectives* – that examine four topics central to the role and function of political parties. Two of the papers, party law and party finance, discuss regulatory mechanisms that directly impact parties, while the other two, intra-party democracy and communications, relate to parties' internal governance and organization.

OPINION POLLS AND RESEARCH

Gathering, understanding, and incorporating data on public opinion are necessary tasks for any political party. That information allows them to develop more effective platforms and strategies. In addition, during an election campaign, it is useful to have periodic assessments of the parties' standing and popularity in order to adjust messages and campaign tactics.

As such, political leaders often find formal focus group and survey research very attractive, and this work can be a great way to capture leadership interest in NDI's work. However, the Institute's work on public opinion polling (almost always conducted in partnership with a polling contractor) should not simply provide "horse race" numbers to party partners. While useful, they generally provide little information about the trends and reasons behind the public's concerns. Instead, NDI uses research to enhance its efforts to create sustainable organizational reforms and capacity.

For example, many programs have trained party activists and officials on reading and interpreting polls, as well as developing the systems and operations to effectively incorporate the results into more effective targeting methods, campaign strategies, and policies. Opinion research can also be used to demonstrate the importance of public outreach and urge parties to try techniques like door-to-door canvassing and voter contact. These methods can also provide parties with useful information on public opinion, as well as being far cheaper. They can provide additional benefits beyond formal polling, including enhancing the

LESSONS LEARNED: PUBLIC OPINION POLLING

"Research should not be a stand-alone project. The results of polling and focus groups should be worked into many aspects of the overall country program.

In Serbia and Indonesia, we have shared polling and focus group results with national leaders, to be sure, but real value comes from using the information in other settings as well. Working the data into message development seminars, voter contact training sessions and Get Out The Vote workshops gave our programs consistency and magnified the impact of the research.

We used the research results in the design of our own programs. Research has helped us understand the electorate in Serbia and in Indonesia better, thus helping us to put together programs that are directly relevant to political party members."

CASE STUDY: MACEDONIA CONSTITUENCY CASEWORK DATABASE

Since 2003, NDI-Macedonia has helped MPs strengthen their connection to constituents by responding to their opinions and interests. In a broad effort to increase communication between Macedonia's elected officials and citizens, NDI is working with the Macedonian parliament and the Association of Mayors (ZELS) to re-open 65 constituency offices throughout the country. When completed, no Macedonian citizen will have to travel more than 30 km to reach an office where they can voice concerns with their elected leaders. Through these efforts, the constituency offices have received more than 120,000 individual visits, held 520 constituent relations events, and registered 9,720 cases on such issues as unemployment and public works projects. In total, 4,589 have been resolved with 323 MP questions put forth in parliament on behalf of citizens.

Technology played a key role in enabling NDI to enhance the parties' capacities. The Institute's Information and Communications Technology team created a database that local MPs offices could use to organize, track, and resolve constituent complaints and issues. Of around 10,000 cases entered into the databases, staff were able to resolve nearly half of them. In addition, the database was designed so that users could input data in Macedonian, Albanian, and English.

The component also fit into NDI's larger program objectives. Staff could use the database to develop a better picture of public concerns and collaborate with the public on solutions to issues like social services, housing, and property regulations. In addition, MPs could target their messages and communication to specific sectors of the population.

The Canadian government originally funded the project, providing computers and other equipment, and USAID then took up the program. Building on these achievements, the team recently received support from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) in August 2007 to continue the work for another two years.

party's image and increasing its ties to the grass-roots public, among others.

However, NDI generally does not encourage or train parties on conducting formal public opinion research by themselves. Programs do occasionally help parties develop simple surveys to gauge grass-roots policy concerns (generally asking "What issues are you concerned about?"). Beyond that, there are serious methodological and operations challenges which make this type of programming inadvisable.

Additional information on public opinion research – including contract issues, methodology, and internal procedures – can be found in the two *From Proposal to Presentation* manuals, one on focus groups and the other on survey research.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

Providing training on using technology can be a

great way to engage party activists at all levels. Many parties are very interested in acquiring and using new technology in their election and internal operations, primarily the ability to communicate with a wide number of people very cheaply.

However, the actual technical piece – a membership database, for example, or a casework tracking system – must be embedded with a wider party building strategy. Too often, parties will obtain a computer program and try to incorporate it into their operations on an ad hoc basis. The typical result is that, after a few months, people simply stop using it and revert to their old techniques.

Parties often need to plan for preparatory training for their staff, strengthen internal communications to delineate new standards for operation, and create feedback channels to effectively incorporate new technology. All of this is to ensure that activists are using the tools new properly, that they are having the desired impact, and to make any necessary changes to party operations. By incorporat-

ing these technical trainings into a wider framework, technology can be a great incentive for parties to create sustainable systems and practices.

Alternatively, technology can enhance NDI activities themselves. In Latin America, the Political Party Network was established to complement the regional Leadership Program by providing an online forum for LP participants to share resources, gain feedback on challenges and opportunities, and allow NDI staff to monitor progress on individual projects. The MENA team has also launched the Aswat online forum to promote dialogue on democratic reform in the Middle East.

In addition, in Serbia, a combination of voter mapping and targeting technology was used to assist parties in identifying geographic areas of support and regions where more work was needed.

MATERIAL ASSISTANCE

NDI often covers some expenses for participants in the Institute's activities. These are incidental to NDI's program (participants are coming to Institute events for training), and can include small travel allowances and providing refreshments.

However, in extremely rare circumstances, NDI may provide direct material assistance to partner parties. Rather than helping to cover the costs of individuals' participation in Institute programs, NDI help to fund a party's operations. This can sometimes be necessary in particularly difficult political environments, where, for example, a single, non-democratic party dominates. While opposition parties can demonstrate the potential and drive to develop democratic practices, the restrictions placed upon them prevent them from having any meaningful chance of developing functioning institutions and procedures.

The level and type of assistance depends a great deal on the parties' individual circumstances and the political environment as a whole, but is usually geared towards covering specific logistics, rental, or equipment costs, rather than a direct disbursement to pay salaries.

A waiver from the funding agency may be required and is given only in especially difficult political circumstances. By and large, however, the overwhelming majority of NDI's programs do not – and should not – include direct assistance.*

* The Political Parties team will soon release an overview of NDI's policy on material assistance to parties.