



# NDI Reports

Fall 2003

20 YEARS WORKING TO STRENGTHEN AND EXPAND DEMOCRACY

## A Message from NDI Chairman Madeleine K. Albright

For two decades, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs and our sister organizations have operated on a simple assumption: that democracy is inseparable from human dignity and peace. To many of us, that assertion may seem unarguable and straightforward. In fact, it is revolutionary.

For centuries, dictators, despots and kings justified repression by conveniently insisting that stability could only be achieved through an iron hand.

During much of the last century, Communists declared that freedom was a bourgeois illusion and that human progress could only be made if everything from kindergarten curricula to industrial production was determined by the state.

When the Cold War ended, new rationales for autocracy were developed by those suggesting that democracy was solely a product of the West and inconsistent with the values of other traditions.

Even today, so-called experts proclaim that democracy in poor societies must first be preceded by development, as if democracy were not itself an essential ingredient of prosperity.

Fortunately, the human desire for freedom is both universal and unquenchable. During the past decade, for the first time in history, more than half the world's population came to live under elected governments, including the majority of Christians, Hindus, Jews and Muslims. The rising tide of democracy has been global, extending to the shores of Chile, the coasts of South Africa and the

islands of the Philippines. From Central America and Central Europe to Central Asia, people have been demanding and obtaining the right to participate in choosing their own leaders and shaping their own laws.

I am proud that NDI has been present and very much a participant in the creation of this bold new era. During the past two decades, NDI has been deeply engaged in transitions to democracy in nearly every corner of every continent, monitoring elections, training political leaders, promoting opportunities for women and helping to build democratic institutions.

*“The forces of extremism grow from the grassroots and must be confronted and defeated at the grassroots through the steady construction of democratic institutions at the community and national level.”*

The democratization of political parties must be a priority in our efforts to restore public confidence in the democratic process as a whole. It should come as no surprise that when political parties fail to fulfill their special roles, the entire democratic system is placed in jeopardy. Greater citizen participation, accountability of leadership, transparency, and institutional safeguards within parties are of vital importance.

This work has been and remains absolutely vital because the struggle to create and sustain democracy is never easy and has no end. Once the euphoria of acquiring freedom is past, the effort to use that liberty wisely and successfully begins. Many new democracies are fragile, having inherited grave problems such as debt, division, disease, poverty and crime. In the face of these obstacles, the effort to translate the promise of democracy into the reality of a better life for the majority of people can be frustrating, slow and hard. There are no guarantees of success. Those who truly wish to live in freedom must demonstrate that commitment not once, but over and over again.

NDI is not alone in helping people around the world to create and consolidate democracy. We are part of a global network that includes intergovernmental bodies, other

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## Middle East in Transition

While negative headlines from the Middle East often dominate the news, there are more positive stories about recent efforts to advance political reform in the region. Women, for example, have made real political strides—an agreement among political parties paved the way for the election of 35 women to the Moroccan parliament; Bahrain became the first country in the Gulf where women were eligible to vote and run in national parliamentary elections; and a record number of women sought elected office in Jordan.

Indigenous democratic activists found new avenues of expression—15,000 local monitors acted as watchdogs for Yemen's parliamentary elections; all of Lebanon's major women's organizations agreed on a national plan of action to address political participation; and democracy activists and journalists from Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Iraq, Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan and the West Bank and Gaza met in Marrakech and Amman to plan strategies for further democratization efforts in their home countries.



Leading democracy activists and journalists from Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Iraq, Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan and the West Bank and Gaza participated in the Maghreb Forum for Democratic Political Action in Marrakech, Morocco.

In Morocco, political party leaders observe focus groups comprised of randomly selected citizens, recording opinions which political parties will, for the first time, build into election platforms and legislative initiatives.

NDI has been supporting these efforts, working with indigenous democratic leaders and activists in political parties, parliaments, nongovernmental organiza-

tions and media outlets throughout the region to build on local strengths and to reinforce demands for political reform.

These programs demonstrate that there is a vast, but largely dormant, democratic middle ground in the Arab world. Marginalized by the domination of two extremes—authoritarian governments and religious extremists—this democratic middle needs support if it is to survive and flourish.

## NDI Focus Groups Reveal Iraqi Attitudes

“Iraqis are glad to be rid of Saddam Hussein and do not want a return to the past,” was but one of the findings NDI gathered from the first scientifically designed public opinion research to be carried out nationwide in Iraq. A series of focus groups, conducted in June and July in north, south and central Iraq, revealed important insights on the attitudes of ordinary Iraqi citizens—men, women, Kurds, Arabs, Sunnis, Shiites, and Christians.



NDI programs in Iraq attract many participants.

A combination of excitement and fear about the prospect of freedom and democracy describe the sentiment of

the Iraqi citizen on the street. Sensing that this is a pivotal moment in their country's history, Iraqis are overwhelmingly grateful for the ouster of Saddam Hussein, but have a strong desire for order and governance.

Iraqis have differing views about the role of Islam in the country's new political order, and women face particular challenges in ensuring their full political participation. Perhaps the most striking finding of the focus group research is how the Iraqis live in a fog of disinformation. The rumor mill and conspiracy theories dominate political discourse and, while Saddam is universally reviled, many are still encumbered by the propaganda he spread. Emerging political parties must

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## Women Win in June Elections

“If you try, you will never lose,” said one of the women candidates who ran for a seat in Jordan’s June 17 parliamentary elections. Fifty-four women from all walks of life, including teachers, businesswomen, lawyers, and mothers, ran for office in the recent elections and took yet another step in the struggle to break through the societal barriers that have kept them out of elected office.

When King Abdullah announced the creation of six new parliamentary seats for women last February, NDI, in cooperation with the Jordanian National Commission for Women, conducted a series of campaign skills training workshops and individual consultations for women who wished to run for office. This program augmented women candidates’ generic campaign skills with individual campaign plans, and provided them

with the advanced skills necessary to organize more professional electoral campaigns.

NDI also helped the Jordanian National Forum for Women to develop a committee that raised funds to produce a media awareness campaign entitled “When Women Win, the Country Wins.”

Six women made history by becoming the first class of women to be elected to parliament. Also, for the first time, more women than men voted in the election. While challenges remain, Jordanian women have begun to develop political

leadership skills that enable them to wage effective campaigns. As a result, these elections marked an important step in promoting women’s political leadership, and will pave the way for other women to achieve even greater electoral successes in the future.



A new member of parliament celebrates her victory in Jordan’s June 2003 parliamentary elections.

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overcome deep skepticism about their motives and role in a new Iraq.

At the same time, there has been an explosion of politics and activism with dozens of new political entities and formerly exiled and underground movements positioning themselves to fill the political vacuum left after the demise of Saddam Hussein’s regime.

In addition to conducting focus group research, NDI, with funding from the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), organized a 14-member mission to Iraq in June and July to assess the conditions for democratic development there. The assessment team visited 10 communities in northern Iraq, southern Iraq and central Iraq, including Baghdad. They met with Iraqi individuals, and organizations and officials from the Coalition Provisional Authority, the United Nations and other international organizations.

The assessment team found a strong sense of anxiety about the future among Iraqis, and disappointment that their immediate

expectations for a post-Saddam Iraq were not being met. As the report states, “[this] indicates the urgency of filling the political vacuum that has allowed sentiment to sour and destructive interests to assert themselves. Time is not on the side of the coalition or Iraqi democrats. Current conditions play into the hands of extremists—religious and nationalist—who point to lack of progress as proof of the need for a strong hand.”

The language and concept of democracy is new to many Iraqis. As the report states, “political parties are universally regarded as corrupt, violent organizations. Non-governmental organizations were nonexistent under Saddam, and terms like the rule of law, checks and balances, accountability and representative government must be defined in everyday conversation. For many, democracy seems to only have two meanings: freedom, which many Iraqis equate with chaos and immorality, or unadulterated rule of the majority; there is little sense of the responsibility and citizen involvement that democracy requires.”

To address these concerns, and to reduce the prospects that the political vacuum in Iraq could eventually be filled by extremist elements, the mission pointed to the immediate and urgent need for democratic education, for party building, and for organizational and material assistance to democratic movements and civic groups.

While in Iraq, members of the assessment team were approached by Iraqi political and civic activists wanting assistance on issues such as how to form and organize political groupings and how to strengthen their civic groups. Initially, impromptu as well as more structured seminars were held, attracting dozens of participants. Since then, NDI has opened an office in Baghdad, and continues to provide organizational assistance to newly formed political parties and civic groups. Some of the Institute’s seminars and training sessions are now attended by hundreds of political and civic activists, eager to participate in Iraq’s emerging democratic structures.

*The focus group and assessment reports can be found on NDI’s web site at [www.ndi.org](http://www.ndi.org).*

## Legislators Have Role to Play in Fighting HIV/AIDS

According to a joint United Nations and World Health Organization report, an estimated 42 million people worldwide were living with HIV in December 2002. More than 20 million people are estimated to have died from AIDS-related causes since the pandemic began more than two decades ago. The financial costs of the pandemic are astronomical—the human impact immeasurable.

In countries hardest hit, the problems resulting from the unchecked spread of HIV/AIDS affects virtually every political, economic and social institution. In many of these countries, governments have been slow to establish the mechanisms to coordinate a much-needed multi-sectoral response. Political leaders have not always demonstrated the commitment to use their legislative, budgetary and oversight roles to develop national HIV/AIDS strategies, and to ensure that these policies are implemented by all sectors of the government and civil society.

Legislatures around the world have been forced to focus their attention on developing and implementing strategies to address the crisis. In many countries, not only the economic costs, but the political costs of not dealing effectively with HIV/AIDS are high. On issues such as the provision of drugs, access to medical treatment and effective public information programs, the public has frequently not seen effective political action from their elected representatives, leading to loss of public confidence in the political system.

Frequently, the burden of fighting the disease has shifted to the nongovernmental sector, which is perceived to have achieved greater success than government in addressing its effects.

Closing the gap between good intentions and policy implementation is essential if countries are to effectively mobilize a national response, as well as ensure that programs can be implemented at the national, regional, and local level. NDI is designing programs to bring together a broad range of actors—including legislators, international and local nongovernmental organizations, military, and civic organizations—in the policy debate, and to assist their efforts to develop effective plans and strategies to address the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

### Nigeria—From Denial to Action

Of the estimated 30 million people living with HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa, 2.6 million



NDI and Pathfinder have sponsored public rallies, health fairs, and HIV/AIDS training for community health workers in eight states.

live in Nigeria, where the rate of infection has tripled in a decade to 6 percent of the population. Recognizing that legislators have an important role in carrying out HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention projects in their districts, NDI and Pathfinder International/Nigeria, an organization that deals with reproductive health issues, have launched a partnership to increase the awareness of National Assembly legislators and their constituents about HIV/AIDS prevention.

Involving lawmakers in prevention and control of HIV/AIDS is helping to break the silence that has shrouded these issues and to move politicians from denial to action.

The National Assembly's newly-established Senate and House standing committees



NDI's program involving legislators in prevention and control of HIV/AIDS helps break the silence about these issues.

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on HIV/AIDS held a joint public hearing before creating a special National Action Committee on AIDS. A special “National Poster of Concern” was designed to draw national attention to the problem. It was

*“It is not enough to be heroes of the world, but we should be doers.”*  
 —*Senator Mamora, Chairman of the Nigerian Senate Ethics Committee*

signed by the parliamentary leadership and President Olusegun Obasanjo, and unveiled at a special ceremony marking the inauguration of the Senate Committee on HIV/AIDS. The House Committee hosted hearings featuring presentations

from government ministries and grassroots organizations. New members of the Assembly who were elected in April will attend a special orientation on HIV/AIDS, and will launch the second edition of the “Poster of Concern” with national publicity.

At the local level, NDI and Pathfinder have collaborated to sponsor public rallies, health fairs, and HIV/AIDS training for community health workers in eight states. These events, often attracting upwards of 1,000 participants, inform citizens about how to identify and prevent HIV, and provide legislators and staff with new ideas about how to reach out to their communities. This unprecedented outreach has created a new rapport between members of the Assembly and their constituents, as well as leading to new public-private partnerships between civil society and the executive branch, through the National Action Committee on AIDS.

As this newsletter went to print, NDI was saddened to learn of the death of Frank McCloskey on November 2. A six-term congressman from Indiana's eighth district, Frank was among the first U.S. political figures to call for international intervention in the Balkans. He was a tireless proponent of democracy and human rights, and worked to give people recovering from the horrors of war a measure of peace and stability in which to rebuild their lives and communities. As director of NDI's office in Kosovo, Frank brought his wisdom and passion to the Institute, for which we are enormously grateful. NDI's Board of Directors, staff and friends extend our sympathies to his wife Roberta and family. We mourn his passing and will always honor his commitment to democracy.



ROMA – PATHS TO POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

In Bulgaria, Romania, and Slovakia, the sizeable Roma community, representing up to 10 percent of the countries' populations, is largely excluded from mainstream politics. Last spring, with funding from the Open Society Institute, NDI assessed the obstacles to Roma political participation. The impetus for governments to address the challenge of Roma rights and citizen participation in Central and Eastern Europe has never been greater, as these countries face the requirements of European Union accession and membership in other international organizations.

NDI's assessment team examined the attitudes and actions of major parties towards Roma as well as the leadership and activism within Roma communities. The team found that Roma political participation has been hampered by the lack of experienced leaders, and a limited tradition of civic and political activism and political organization, which is compounded by the Roma's exclusion from traditional political parties.

Although there are significant challenges to Roma participation, there are also important opportunities to encourage stronger political leadership, and a political environment that might be more receptive to their inclusion.

The key to increasing the influence and engagement of the Roma is to foster a sense of unity among Roma communities, build the strengths of Roma civic organizations and activists, and create a core group of political leaders. Speaking with a unified voice, the Roma community will carry more political weight, and be better able to influence political parties to bring Roma into their membership ranks and elevate them into leadership positions.

An inspiring group of Roma grassroots activists has emerged in recent years, as have civic groups that are organizing, producing leaders, and helping lead the discussion about the future of the Roma. In the coming year, NDI plans to assist their efforts.

## Madeleine K. Albright

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nongovernmental organizations and freedom-loving governments everywhere. Together we are dedicated to building a true community of democracies in which free peoples help and learn from each other, while promoting the ideals to which our citizens and societies aspire.

All this matters because it is right but also because it is smart. If you run down the list of challenges the world now faces, from regional strife to HIV/AIDS, to intolerance and pollution, democracy is the surest path to advancement. And democracy builders such as NDI are vital assets in the struggle against violent extremism and international terror. It is no accident that where terrorists are most present, democracy is most absent. Certainly, terrorists can exist and strike anywhere. But they cannot long flourish in

any society where leaders are held accountable and the rule of law is applied.

The fight against terror cannot be won solely by military means or even by expenditures on homeland defense. It is more a clash of ideas than a clash of arms. And no idea is more important than the conviction that every individual is endowed with the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. The forces of extremism grow from the grassroots and must be confronted and defeated at the grassroots through the steady construction of democratic institutions at the community and national level. This applies to every region, but perhaps especially right now to the Middle East. I know there are some who fear giving power to the so-called "Arab street." But I submit there is far more to fear from the silenced and repressed, than from any group able to

shape its own future and conscious of the responsibility for doing so.

According to Goethe, "The great part of all the mischief in the world arises from the fact that men do not sufficiently understand their own aims. They undertake to build a tower, and spend no more labor on the foundation than it would take to build a hut."

NDI is a living testament to our own understanding of the difficulty and necessity of establishing a firm and lasting foundation for democracy around the world. We have been hard at work at this task for twenty years. During that time, we have grown, learned and achieved much. We have a list of accomplishments sufficient to justify pride on the part of everyone affiliated with the Institute. We look to the future with confidence. But we also know that our labors and those of democratic allies everywhere have barely begun.



In recent years, party financing scandals have shaken countries in every region of the world, drawing increased local and international attention to political corruption and the erosion of public confidence in democratic processes. Many countries lack party or campaign financing legislation, and where laws do exist, there is often a lack of effective enforcement mechanisms.

With support from the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID), in February NDI launched a two-year initiative to encourage dialogue and debate on the issue of party financing in Africa and develop possible solutions to the problem.

In the first phase of the project, NDI is gathering comparative information on the cost of getting elected at the national level in 25 countries around the world.

In each country, researchers gather information on an extensive range of issues and citizens' perceptions. Topics include:

whether or not there are laws and regulations affecting political parties and campaigns; how parties and campaigns are financed and how party funds are managed; what campaign funds are spent on and what the public perception of that process is; and what role, if any, does corruption and vote buying play in the electoral and political process.

This information will be used in the second phase of the project, which will assist the efforts of local civic partners in four African countries—Ghana, Kenya, Senegal and South Africa—to promote increased debate on party finance within their respective countries, and work with party leaders and government officials to develop long-term action plans for political party finance reform. Advisors to the program include: Musikari Kombo, Kenyan Member of Parliament; Jose Norberto Carrilho, Justice of the Supreme Court of Mozambique; Justice Joseph Warioba, Former Prime Minister and Chief Justice of Tanzania; and Marie Elise-Gbedo, Vice President of the Association of Women Jurists of Benin.

## Groundbreaking Election Debates

The lead up to Cambodia's July 27 parliamentary elections was marred by widespread violence and intimidation. As in past elections, the ruling Cambodian People's Party controlled election administration and most of the electronic media.

However, in 2003 a new element was introduced—debates among parliamentary candidates that, for the first time, allowed Cambodian voters to witness their parliamentary candidates discussing policy issues and responding to questions from a live audience. Twenty debates were staged in half of Cambodia's 24 provinces over the 30-day campaign period. Twelve of the debates were aired nationwide on a private television station and several radio stations. Overall, the debates attracted a live audience of at least 25,000, with tens of thousands more watching or listening to the taped broadcasts.

NDI partnered with civil society organizations in organizing the debates. Fourteen of the 23 parties contesting the elections participated, including all three of the parties represented in the National Assembly.

In previous elections, Cambodia's opposition parties received virtually no television airtime; in 2003 they received more than 20 hours of collective exposure as part of the debate program alone. Extensive media attention to the program itself supplemented coverage.

In each of the 12 provinces where the debates were held, the civic group with primary responsibility for hosting the debate first organized discussion groups with local residents to determine the issues that mattered most to voters. Over 140 discussion groups involving over 2,800 people were organized. The information that was gathered was then used to formulate questions for the candidates.



Debate in Kampong Chhnang Province with candidates from the three main parties. Despite political differences, the candidates joined hands at the end of each debate.

In a companion program, written questions were posed to the political parties. The parties' responses were used to develop provincial voter guides in conjunction with the debates. A

total of 240,000 voter guides were produced and distributed in the 12 provinces. This allowed voters, whether or not they were able to attend the debates, to learn about their candidates.

*NDI's programs in Cambodia for the 2003 elections also included: developing a Code of Conduct for political parties; providing technical assistance to domestic election monitoring organizations and political parties; creating Cambodia's first television program featuring dialogues on public policy issues; and sponsoring focus group research. These programs, as well as two pre-election international*

*observer missions, were supported by grants from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). The focus group research report and pre-election assessment reports can be found on NDI's website at [www.ndi.org](http://www.ndi.org).*

***Cambodians commented on how seeing debates among multiple candidates helped broaden their perspective on who to vote for. As reported by the Associated Press, one voter observing the debate in Battambang compared it to buying gems. He stated, "If there is only one gemstone in front of you, you cannot tell if it's really the best. But when there are several on offer, you can make the best choice."***

## NDI CELEBRATES 20 YEARS

Over the past two decades, NDI has worked in every region of the world, in over 60 countries, with the help of thousands of staff, trainers, and volunteers to advance democratic values and practices. During the next year, NDI will celebrate 20 years of such work through a series of special events and programs:

- In December, 40 women political leaders from 20 countries will convene in Washington for the *Win with Women* global forum to advance strategies for increasing women's leadership roles in political parties. Through a series of working groups, these women leaders will develop a "Global Action Plan" for political party reforms.
- Next spring, NDI will celebrate the achievements of courageous individuals who have contributed to peaceful democratic change at the Institute's *16th Annual Harriman Democracy Awards* ceremony. Leaders from different regions of the world will recount the successes of the worldwide democracy movement as well as future challenges.
- In Boston next July, NDI will bring together over 500 foreign leaders from 100 countries to observe the Democratic National Convention and the party's presidential nominating process. NDI has organized this program, the *International Leaders Forum*, at every Convention since 1984. It offers foreign leaders a rare opportunity to exchange ideas with their global counterparts, and provides unique insights into the U.S. political process.

While an anniversary offers time to reflect, NDI is keenly aware that the need for its work continues to grow. The Institute must have the flexibility and resources to support courageous democrats who are struggling to promote peaceful democratic change and build democratic institutions.

To meet these challenges, NDI is asking for your support. By contributing today, you will be joining more than 1,000 organizations and individuals who have supported the Institute over the years.

Contributions will go to the Democratic Century Fund, a source of private funding that provides long-term investments in NDI's programs. A donation envelope can be found inside this newsletter.

We appreciate your involvement and support.

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