“We believe that a nation’s progress depends on the progress of women; that the strength of democracy depends on the inclusion of women; that the richness of civil society depends on the full participation of women; that human rights are women’s rights; and women’s rights are human rights.”

-Hillary Rodham Clinton,
Vital Voices of the Americas, October 1998

Welcome to the seventh edition of the Civic Update. This edition will look at how some of NDI’s civic participation programs foster greater women’s participation in political processes. Highlighted in the newsletter are programs in Malawi, Egypt, Azerbaijan and the East Africa region. In addition, the Update includes insights from resident representatives in Nepal and Bosnia on how to encourage increased women’s participation.

We hope this edition is helpful and look forward to hearing your comments and suggestions. Please send your remarks to Keith Jennings, Aaron Azelton, or Sylvia Panfil.

What Do We Mean by Women’s Participation?

Around the globe, the women’s rights movement—also known as feminist and women’s liberation movements—has made some progress. Comprising more than half of most electorates, women presently can vote in almost every country. Moreover, women hold public office in more than ninety percent of nations.\(^1\)

Arising in Europe in the late 18th century and spreading outward, the women’s movement guaranteed women political, social and economic equality in societies that traditionally confer more status and freedom to men. Many of these rights were legally secured by the year 1970. Complete political, economic and social equality with men, however, has not been achieved in any country to date.\(^2\)

In many regions, such as the Middle East and Asia, women rarely achieve elected political office or access to political careers. By and large, it is difficult for women to achieve positions of political leadership through traditional routes. Nonetheless, women throughout the world are developing leadership skills in non-governmental and community-based organizations. In addition, women’s groups and activists are increasingly recognizing the benefits of greater communication and collaboration with each other.\(^3\)

Supporting the increased participation of women in political processes is consistent with NDI’s mandate to strengthen the inclusive and representative nature of democratic institutions worldwide. The Institute’s civic programs work to inform and motivate all citizens, including women, for greater participation through voting, monitoring elections and community organizing.

In most countries where NDI conducts civic participation programs, legal frameworks already grant women equal rights. NDI civic programs, therefore, affect women by increasing their understanding of political issues so that they may more effectively participate in political processes. Often, civic programs educate women about their legal rights and work to increase their understanding of the link between political participation and the policies that affect their lives. Because of entrenched cultural views on gender roles, these activities usually involve promoting women’s self-confidence and changing their attitudes toward political participation. NDI, thus, aims to connect politics to women’s everyday lives and empower women to take a more active role in political processes. At times, this means that NDI works in conjunction with women’s groups and other civic groups to encourage and enable women to participate in the political process.

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\(^1\) The United Nations World’s Women 1970-1990: Trends and Statistics

\(^2\) Microsoft Encarta 1996 Encyclopedia

\(^3\) The United Nations World’s Women 1970-1990: Trends and Statistics
Expanding the Role of Women in Malawi’s Upcoming Elections

Malawi’s democratic consolidation process is at a pivotal stage with parliamentary and presidential elections approaching in 1999. These are only the second such elections since Malawi’s transition in 1993. For Malawi women, now is an opportunity to increase political participation and power. Although they make up fifty-two percent of the population, women are still faced with discrimination at almost every turn. They receive lower levels of education, limited access to media and lower incomes. Based on an underlying tradition of male-dominance, these factors and others inhibit women from participating actively and equally in the country’s political process.

Since 1993, NDI’s program activities in Malawi have consistently addressed gender issues. As part of its civic program, the Malawi team works with the Council for NGOs of Malawi (CONGOMA) to provide members with advice, training and technical assistance to increase their organizational capacity and enhance their training skills. Within CONGOMA, women’s groups play a necessary role in conducting civic education training sessions, raising awareness about women’s rights, advocating on behalf of women, and training woman candidates to assume political leadership roles.

Recognizing the role women’s groups can play in increasing citizen participation, the Malawi team plans to enhance its work with women’s groups, including finding strategic ways to increase groups’ collaboration with the parliamentary Women’s Caucus.

With elections forthcoming, the Malawi team also plans to train a group of “voter education specialists”—at least fifty-percent of which will be women—in electoral procedures ranging from voter registration, to poll watching and ballot counting. The training curriculum will include gender sensitization sessions to increase participants’ awareness of women’s rights, particularly the right of equal participation in the political process. Upon completion of the training sessions, all “voter education specialists” will be expected to use what they have learned to train other voter educators and domestic monitors at the district and village level. They will train men and women in equal numbers.

While organizing the initial training sessions, NDI will also work to improve the collaboration between a consortium of local groups and the NGO-Church Consortium. The voter education specialists will be drawn from these two consortiums. As a result of consortium partnership, voter education specialists will be able to cover a greater geographic area. Likewise, they will be able to effectively reach groups traditionally marginalized from the political process, one of the largest being women.

A net result of the voter education and monitor training activities should be an increase in women’s political participation. Women will not only be more educated as voters, but their role and investment in Malawi’s democracy will increase because of their service as trainers and monitors. Furthermore, in these roles, Malawi women will perform responsibilities that help break down discriminatory traditions of male-dominated political activism.

For more information regarding NDI-Malawi program activities, please contact Lhatoya Reed
Women’s Group Works to Increase Participation at the Grassroots

In a country, such as Egypt, where widespread apathy toward political and civic life prevails, the need to promote active participation at the grassroots is critical to strengthening democracy. Low election turnouts and lack of citizen interest in community-based initiatives are trends common in Egyptian society—particularly among the poorer sectors. Indigenous groups that attempt to counter citizen apathy and promote participation are faced with legal restrictions, such as Law 32, which limit the ability of NGOs to operate.

In the case of women’s groups, they must develop strategic and gender-sensitive ways to communicate effectively and organize women, who, for the most part, are poor, illiterate and live according to conservative values.

To foster greater grassroots citizen participation among Egyptians, NDI initiated a twofold civic program in 1996. Part of this program involved working with the Egyptian Center for Women’s Rights (ECWR) to promote women’s participation. The ECWR was formed to heighten women’s awareness about the importance of active participation in society and to encourage women to exercise their political, legal and social rights. In the past two years, NDI’s technical support and funding has helped ECWR to conduct grassroots civic education activities, and develop into a more effective, sustainable and well-known organization in Egyptian society.

From March until July 1998, NDI placed a resident representative in Cairo to help increase ECWR’s organizational capacity. Specifically, NDI worked to develop within ECWR a core of experienced individuals capable of planning civic education activities, hiring and training discussion moderators, and monitoring and evaluating programs.

ECWR is currently encouraging Egyptian women to register to vote and to engage in dialogue with local government representatives. Through civic education activities, ECWR moderators are helping to increase the willingness and ability of women to participate in political processes, including voter registration. In addition, moderators further support women by accompanying them to voter registration offices and walking them through the registration process.

ECWR has also increased women’s participation in civic life by forming committees of women throughout Cairo’s most poverty-stricken neighborhoods. The neighborhood committees invite local government officials to public meetings where they discuss community issues with citizens. Consequently, local officials are beginning to realize that they are accountable to their constituents and must respond to concerns.

Interested in learning more about programming in NDI-Egypt? Contact Margaret Zaknoen.

Empowering Women to Participate Civic and Political Life

In Azerbaijan—one of the most conservative countries in a region still skeptical about women’s political participation—NDI has recently found a promising partner in the Organization for the Protection of Women's Rights (OPWR). In existence since 1990, OPWR is a grassroots organization which has demonstrated real potential for
bringing women into the political process. OPWR is the only women's organization with members in most of Azerbaijan's regions. It works on a wide range of issues affecting women's social, economic and political status, including assisting women refugees, providing legal advice to women and raising political awareness.

In 1998, NDI began a pilot project with OPWR in Baku and six regions. Through seminars and written materials, OPWR educated women about the presidential elections which Azerbaijan held in October, and urged women to vote and to consider running for election in the future. Participants in the ten seminars included members of different political parties, and civic activists.

Azerbaijan's government has promised to hold the country's first nationwide post-Soviet local government elections in October 1999. Although it remains difficult for women to compete for public office in Azerbaijan, local government elections may offer new opportunities. The sheer number of new offices to be filled and the exodus from Azerbaijan of men seeking economic opportunities may allow for a larger role for women in the political life of some communities.

In preparation for these elections, NDI plans to expand its cooperation with OPWR. This spring, the Institute will conduct introductory seminars for potential woman candidates, including, journalists and political party activists. Speakers will explain the responsibilities of the new local government councils, and encourage women to explore the possibility of running for office. Assuming the Azerbijani government keeps its promise to proceed with local elections, OPWR will also prepare educational materials explaining the local elections law (as it evolves), including the requirements and obligations for candidates.

Please contact Katie Fox if interested in learning more about the Azerbaijan program.

Increasing Regional Ties among Women Groups

In East African countries—plagued by ethnic and regional divisions, a history of authoritarian governments, and little tradition of sustained democratic rule—civil society organizations are moving to the forefront in pressing for more democratic institutions and practices.

Women’s groups are an important and growing segment of East Africa’s civil society. Faced with the challenge of operating in male-oriented political cultures and with limited resources, women’s groups have made noteworthy advances in creating opportunities for women’s participation in politics and government. Advocacy campaigns, effective coalitions and political education programs for women are among the approaches women’s organizations have begun to use to create such opportunities.

Realizing the need to promote such practices and to strengthen the links among East African women’s groups, NDI organized its first East Africa Regional Women’s Conference in November 1998. The conference brought together representatives from select Kenyan, Tanzanian and Ugandan women’s groups for a three-day event involving technical training, and panel discussions that addressed the current political landscape for women in East Africa.

NDI drew on experienced women leaders to facilitate these conference activities. Alice Lamptey, the vice chairperson for the NGO Coalition The Rights of a Child and the chair of the Women’s Empowerment Unit, trained participants on strategies to overcome challenges faced in organizing NGOs into coalitions. Lindiwe Zulu, deputy speaker of the Gauteng Legand, spoke about the South African experience with gender specific affirmative action. And, former resident representative for NDI-Kenya’s women candidate training program Wanda Williams outlined a political education program.

In a session on advocacy campaign planning, the trainer led participants through strategic planning steps outlined in a step-by-step advocacy manual developed by NDI’s team in West Bank & Gaza. The trainer then introduced a case study. Participants from Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda were subsequently mixed and divided into three working groups where, together, they applied the planning steps to the case study. Each working group elected a rapporteur to keep
notes and serve as the group’s spokesperson. After developing their advocacy plans, each group gave a report and explained the decisions, which helped plenary participants evaluate each other’s work.

This training session, along with other conference activities, provided participants with some hands-on practice using new tools and techniques. It also helped them learn to work together and begin to develop productive relationships.

After three full days of workshops and panel discussions, NDI had women from the Kenyan, Tanzanian and Ugandan organizations select country spokespersons to ensure further communication and future collaboration among them. In addition to planning for follow-up activities with women groups throughout the region, NDI will place all conference participants on a mailing list to keep them informed of women’s issues around the globe.

For more information on the East Africa Regional Women’s Conference, please contact Jennifer Pelzman at jenp@ndi.org

Women’s Involvement in Civic Forum

An Interview with Bosnia Resident Representative Nick Green

In response to an e-mail interview conducted by the Citizen Participation team, Nick Green addresses the topic of women’s participation.

— “It must be noted that NDI’s Civic Program in Tuzla was not started under the premise of a Women’s Political Participation program. However, as a result of NDI’s program, there have been and will continue to be women beneficiaries (but it has not been the focus of the program).

As part of NDI’s exit strategy we are in the process of transforming the Civic Forum program into an independent, country-wide NGO called the Centers For Civic Initiatives (CCI). CCI’s mission is to promote active citizen participation in the democratization process and to strengthen the capacities of organizations and citizens to solve community problems in Bosnia and Herzegovina. How much CCI will concentrate on women’s issues remains to be seen.

With that in mind, here are responses to your questions:”

How does your program work toward increasing women’s political participation? What considerations do you take into mind?

“First of all, women and men both serve as discussion group moderators and community organizers. In the discussion group phase of our program we have worked purposefully with various women’s associations. The contents of the discussion groups are related to democracy and the Bosnian transition process. The design of the content has evolved in order to better equip citizens with knowledge that will hopefully induce them to take some kind of progressive action.”

What do you think to be the most effective way in recruiting women (i.e., word of mouth, radio, going to places/events where women usually convene)?

“The ways you mention above are effective, except for radio. Radio is the most over rated means of advertising. Our program uses Bosnians to recruit Bosnians. Regarding women, our staff have gone out to places where women convene/work and have, as a result, formed democracy discussion groups. Contacting the head of a women’s association is also an effective means for recruitment. She is able then to bring constituents together on NDI/CCI’s behalf. It is up to our program and staff to keep them interested and involved. An effective way to recruit women does not always mean that an issue specifically related to women has to be the magnet. Domestic monitoring is a great example where women's groups came together because they saw monitoring as a real need in the country and a way for their organizations to network with others.”

Do you target specific groups of women?

“.... We have not really targeted specific groups. Our criteria for working with women’s groups is the same as for other kinds of groups.”

What training materials and methodologies did you find particularly effective in training women?

“Don’t have one or two women in a group with all the rest being men. Yet, I remember a group as such where the two women were amongst the most active participants. Normally this is not the case in this country.”
What are some general recommendations you would make when designing a program in which one of the goals is to increase and strengthen women’s participation?

“Don’t just concentrate on issues specifically related to women. To do that would limit the potential influence of women’s movements. For example, a women’s association needs to be cognizant of the possibilities and necessities of connecting with a pensioner group in order to improve a school system. Women and pensioner indeed have a vested interest in having a good school system for children in their community. Work on this issue successfully and the sphere of women’s influence is greatly enhanced.”

For more information on the Bosnia Civic Forum program contact Alicia Allison at aliciaa@ndi.org.

Designing Programs to Increase Women’s Participation

Lessons Learned from Nepal Resident Representative Maryam Montague

Since 1994, NDI’s program in Nepal has made considerable efforts to increase women’s participation and clout in political processes. Programming in Nepal has included voter education, training for women local government candidates, and an extensive program to train women representatives in local government. Because of her extensive work on the Nepal program, the Citizen Participation team asked resident representative Maryam Montague to give some suggestions on how to design and implement programs that increase women’s political participation.

Considerations for effectively designing the program

“In preparation for designing a women’s program, it is really important to do your homework. Collect information about the existing status of women in various sectors (such as, demographic, social, economic, political etc.). Conducting focus groups or informal surveys may be helpful in this regard. It is important to be aware of the relevant laws and rules that pertain to women’s participation. It is also helpful to do a good assessment of similar programs conducted by other organizations or the government in country.”

Cultural/political considerations taken for Nepal programs

Re: Voter education program

“There are a number of factors that we had to keep in mind when designing and conducting the women’s voter education program in Nepal. Like many developing countries, Nepal is a patriarchy. At the outset of the program, we learned that in some conservative areas women are largely restricted to the household arena, and in some instances are not “permitted” to vote by their husbands. When women did vote, they often cast their ballots in a way mandated by their husbands or families. Because of a low level of awareness, many women are also not aware of the link between voting and social change. As a result, for the 1994 elections there was apathy among women voters, which led to a concern that women would not turn out to vote. We needed to consider all these issues when targeting women voters. It was for these reasons that we designed a program that combined education on women’s rights with information on techniques for women to get out the women’s vote.”

Re: Local government training

“Prior to the 1997 local government elections around which we designed our program, women’s representation in local government was less than 0.05%. Because of a quota system, thousands of women were ushered into local government office for the first time just recently. However, this influx of women was difficult for many men, including male local government leaders, to accept. Therefore, it was essential for the program to include the participation of male local government leaders, particularly in the decision-making that went into the program. To better arm the women representatives, we also developed a training module on Men and Women Working Together.”

Recruiting women program participants

“In terms of getting women’s participation in our programs, we often directly invite women to participate. In other instances, we stipulate the number of women to be invited and we stick to this.”
Program activities most effective in involving women

Re: Voter education program
“We conducted workshops at a local level that were easier for local women to attend. We also went to a women’s festival which thousands of women attend to pass out posters and materials, and talk about the importance of voting.”

Re: Local government training
“We conducted training once a week for an 8-week period in the villages where the target women live, which allowed them time to attend to their other household responsibilities. This was a better approach than a residential program, which would have made it more difficult for women to attend.”

Important considerations when training women
♀ Cultural (caste)/religious values.
♀ Ways to prevent male backlash.
♀ Methodology that takes into account a lower literacy level, such as role plays, games and visuals (drawings, etc.).
♀ Women (and men!) facilitators (if possible).
♀ Constant evaluations to make sure you are getting it right.

The role men can play in the program
♀ Consider viable ways to obtain male support and participation.
♀ “...[in Nepal] it was very important for NDI to get the buy-in of male leaders. We consulted often with male leaders and they participated in our training program as resource persons.”

Suggestions when working with a civic group
♀ A good assessment of the background of the group;
♀ Ensuring the non-partisanship of the group, if need be;
♀ A good assessment of the reputation of the group among the people;
♀ Ensuring that the group holds enough manpower and resources.

If interested in obtaining training, evaluation, or informational materials produced by NDI-Nepal, please contact Sarah Lucey.

Ways women can educate one another for political empowerment, as identified in the Vienna Vital Voices Conference for Women:
• Educate each other on issues and techniques through networking;
• Educate on women’s political rights and responsibilities;
• Educate on voter rights and responsibilities;
• Conduct participatory methods of education (e.g., debates, discussions) to give young women a political voice early in their lives;
• Mentor young girls;
• Teach women how to use the media;
• Train women to run for office.

NEW AND DEPARTING RESIDENT STAFF

Albania
Erin Saberi has departed from NDI, after having served two years as resident representative in Albania. During her time there, Erin worked with the Society of Democratic Culture (SDC) to educate Albanian citizens of their rights and responsibilities, and facilitate dialogue between elected officials and their constituents.

Armenia
NEW—Jeff Swedberg has come on board to NDI as the new resident director for Armenia, where he will work with the civic group It’s Your Choice to monitor the maintenance of a nationwide network of volunteer election observers. Jeff’s previous experience includes working as a legislative assistant to Speaker Tom Foley, as well as a public policy associate at the American Red Cross.

Eastern Slavonia
Greg Starosky, resident representative for Eastern Slavonia’s Civic Forum program, will be leaving NDI this month. While conducting a grassroots civic program, Greg used education and organizing techniques to increase Eastern Slavonians understanding of democratic principles, and provide them with advocacy skills to hold elected representatives accountable.

Ghana
After having conducted NDI’s civic program in Ghana for the past year, Paul Nuti recently left NDI in October. While in Ghana, Paul’s
work help bring about the first-ever, sustained dialogues between NGO representatives and legislators, and prompted local groups to incorporate lobbying outreach into their issue advocacy planning.

**Haiti**

NEW—Joining NDI as a senior resident representative for Haiti’s Civic Forum program is Peter Harvey. Peter comes to NDI with significant international experience, having previously worked as an OSCE voter registration and election supervisor, and a U.S. Peace Corps development agent in Senegal. In addition, Peter has experience conducting grassroots advocacy campaigns, organizing coalitions and designing adult training curriculums.

NEW—Gillian Gloyer, who comes to NDI with background in election processes, advocacy and campaigning, was also recently hired as a resident representative for Haiti. In the past, Gillian has supervised voter registration for the OSCE, worked as a campaign coordinator for the United Nations, and held various executive posts with the Scottish Young Liberals.

**Liberia**

NEW—Paline Kwabo recently joined NDI to work on Liberia’s grassroots civic education program, Civic Forum. Paline comes to NDI having previously worked as a counselor to the Child Soldiers AMEZCC/UNICEF demobilization program, and administrative manager for the Protection of Liberia Interest.

In November, Raul Yzaguirre, president of National Council of the Raza (NCLR) and NDI Board member, joined staffers to speak about the challenges of advocating for the rights of a minority group. He particularly discussed how NCLR addresses issues given the growing diversity of the Latino community.

Most recently, the executive director for Amnesty International, Bill Schulz, spoke on the topic of human rights, particularly in reference to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR), on its upcoming 50th anniversary.

**WHAT'S HAPPENING BACK IN DC?**

**NGO Leadership Lecture Series**

Recently, the Strategy and Evaluation Team initiated the "NGO Leadership Lecture Series," bringing to NDI prominent U.S. civic leaders to share their experiences and insights on important issues relating to democracy building.

To kick off the series, in October, National Organization of Women (NOW) President Patricia Ireland spoke to staff about civic advocacy for women’s rights. Ireland shared personal experiences that led her to espouse feminist causes, and addressed questions on how NOW functions in areas such as candidate support, coalition building and membership recruitment.

**Take Note...**

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 10, 1948. A few excerpts of the UNDHR that follow are especially pertinent to NDI programs and activities.

**Article 21**

(1) Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.

(2) Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country.

(3) The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections, which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

**Training of Trainers (TOT)**

In response to staff requests, the Citizen Participation team conducted a six-hour training how-to workshop for NDI staff members on November 12th and 13th. Beverly Whitest and

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4 Microsoft Encarta 1996 Encyclopedia
Aaron Azelton acted as trainers. The interactive workshop provided attending staff members with an increased understanding of the purpose and process of training. Through facilitated discussion and small group activities, they learned the steps to planning and designing an effective training program, including how to develop achievable training objectives, corresponding activities and evaluation procedures.

The workshop participants, drawn from almost every NDI department, agreed that they are now better equipped to help design training programs and offer constructive feedback to resident representatives. They also suggested a desire for additional in-house staff development activities. In the future, the Citizen Participation team intends to organize—through consultations with the regional teams—similar workshops that will help staff members carry out their programmatic responsibilities more effectively.

Finding Your Public Voice, practical guide to become more familiar and skilled in dealing with the media.

• Women’s Human Rights Step by Step, a practical how-to manual to educate women about their human rights and effective advocacy techniques.

• NDI-Nepal Women Representative Training Kit, includes training manual and props (e.g., games, visuals) adaptable to any type of training.

Civic Education


• Preparing Citizens: Linking Authentic Assessment and Instruction in Civic/Law-Related Education, how-to strategies for evaluating civic education.

Community Organizing


• In Your Hands: Community Action Guide for Human Rights Year and Beyond, strategies for human rights education commemorating the 50th anniversary of UNDHR.

• Who Are the Question Makers?, how to create participatory community development processes.

Institution Building

• Local Civic Action and Outside Assistance: Partnership or Dependency?, strengths and weaknesses of partnerships between international and local NGOs.

• Setting the Development Agenda: Development vs. Democracy?

• The Unit of Development is the Organization, Not the Project, tips on creating NGOs.


Leadership Development


• The Leader of The Future, compilation of leadership development writings.

Trainer Information

Requests for information can be made to Aaron Azelton or Sylvia Panfil.

REFERENCE MATERIALS

Women Groups, Leaders & Training Materials

• Womens_interest@ndi.org, an e-mail list that NDI staff can join to exchange information on issues relating to women.

• Encyclopedia of Women’s Associations Worldwide

• International Directory of Women’s Political Leadership

• Media Guidebook for Women: Finding Your Public Voice, practical guide to become more familiar and skilled in dealing with the media.

• Women’s Human Rights Step by Step, a practical how-to manual to educate women about their human rights and effective advocacy techniques.

• NDI-Nepal Women Representative Training Kit, includes training manual and props (e.g., games, visuals) adaptable to any type of training.


• Preparing Citizens: Linking Authentic Assessment and Instruction in Civic/Law-Related Education, how-to strategies for evaluating civic education.

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Research, Writing, Layout, Graphics: Sylvia Panfil with contributions from NDI staff.
Editing: Aaron Azelton and Keith Jennings with contributions from NDI staff.