



Civic Update

a newsletter of NDI citizen participation programs worldwide

Issue II

August 2001

This issue of NDI's Civic Update examines some methods being used by staff members to assess program performance regularly. The assessment methods highlighted in the update include, focus groups, surveys, key informant interviews, program review meetings and observations.

How Do We Keep Programs On Track?

Engines are revving, the smell of exhaust and hot pavement permeate the air as adrenalin courses through your veins. The route is mapped according to the "best" description of the terrain, sponsorship has been acquired and supplies secured. The flag falls and you sink the accelerator to the floor. Your vehicle blazes out of Paris on the road rally to Dakar. This is just the beginning, however. As it turns out, the road is not often well-paved or direct. During the journey, occasional forks and detours make it necessary to determine if you are still on course and on time. Not to mention you must also contend with watered-down petrol, hitchhikers and surly customs officials. If you are going to make it, you must assess your

situation and make requisite adjustments regularly.

Although NDI programs may not always be as challenging as a race across the heart of Africa, they still require a well-mapped route and regular assessment to ensure no wrong turns. This requires program staff members to determine periodically where a program is positioned and whether it is still on the right track.

Regular *program assessment* for performance monitoring purposes is different than *program evaluation*. Whereas program evaluation is often a one-time process for determining whether a program succeeded in achieving the stated objectives, program assessment is a periodic process for determining if a program is moving in the desired direction.

Developing a program assessment process starts as baseline information is gathered, needs are determined and program objectives are defined. The objectives mark the end points against which program activities are assessed. Ideally, every activity moves a program closer to the stated program objectives. The question then becomes: How will we know this is happening effectively?

For all practical purposes, it is not reasonable to wait until the end of a program to determine if the activities have added up to the anticipated outcomes. An assessment process will allow the program's pulse to be checked regularly from start to finish. This requires asking constantly: What activities are working? Why? Why not? and What changed as a result? The process also creates a body of information that can be used in the end to illustrate a program's step-by-step development and can aid greatly in the development of final reports.

Periodic assessments also prevent programs from taking wrong turns and never stopping for directions. This is not to suggest that a change is bad or that a program cannot redefine objectives and activities mid-course, only that an unplanned and unrecognized change of direction will often lead to less-than-successful outcomes. Assessment helps identify program strengths and weaknesses, and allows for continual program modification and improvement.

For an assessment process to work, it is necessary to determine what assessment information is needed, how it will be gathered,

who will gather it, when it will be gathered, and how it will be used. The actual monitoring process can be as simple as observing the implementation of activities, talking with program participants, and collecting anecdotes for use in quarterly reports. It can also involve more systematic methods such as regular focus groups or surveys. The information generated through the monitoring process should then be reviewed in light of objectives, benchmarks, future activities and underlying assumptions. The analysis and conclusion can then be shared through field reports and used by teams for periodic program development discussions.

During the course of most programs, several different levels of assessment will be necessary. These levels include:

- **Reaction:** This measures how participants respond to a workshop, seminar or some other program activity. (e.g., how did participants feel about the content, the facilitator or trainer, the materials distributed, the food?).
- **Learning:** This measures what participants know and what they are able to do as a result of program activities (e.g., do they know how government is organized, can they write a proposal, can they run a meeting?).
- **Behavior:** This measures what participants actually do differently in their work (e.g., are they writing proposals for alternative funding, are they recruiting volunteers door-to-door, are they forming coalitions?).
- **Results:** This measures what the participants have accomplished after they have changed their behavior (e.g., did they receive new funding, recruit

500 volunteers win an advocacy campaign?).

- **Impact:** (This is the Big Kahuna!) It measures the aspects of democracy that have changed over the long run as a result of NDI intervention (e.g., are there established precedents for citizen participation in policy-making, do elected representatives respond to constituent concerns?).

The Consultant

(To the tune of Kenny Rogers', "The Gambler".)

*You got to know when they're needed, know when to hire 'em,
Know what you want of them,
know what you don't,
You never cease your feedback
when the consultant's on a project,
There'll be time to share learned lessons, when the reportin's done.*

Survey Says...Assessment!

You could be on Saville Row in London, Vaci utca in Budapest or Rruga Mother Theresa in Pristina, wherever the location, the process of designing and sewing a new set of clothes is basically the same. But, if you are not skilled in the practice, you may need to hire a tailor. The resident senior program managers for Civic Forum (CF)-Albania, Mary Margaret Dineen, and Civic Forum (CF)-Kosovo, Koebel Price, found a similar need for outside expertise when working to develop a survey research tool for program assessment.

Mary Margaret and Koebel wanted an assessment tool capable of indicating changes in participants' attitudes and knowledge resulting from NDI activities. The Civic Forum civic

education methodology relies on locally recruited *field coordinators* trained by NDI, who organize and facilitate community-based discussion groups that typically meet every few weeks. The groups move through a progression of democracy education sessions, in which knowledge is developed, skills are acquired and attitudes are shaped. Over time, the new knowledge, skills, and attitudes form the foundation for the groups' collective political participation. Mary Margaret and Koebel wanted an instrument to measure the extent that knowledge and attitudes change as a result of the educational discussions.

On the whole, NDI tends to rely on qualitative information or "soft" evidence, such as personal testimony and observations to indicate changes in participants' knowledge and attitudes. After consultation with Washington colleagues, however, Mary Margaret and Koebel determined that CF Albania and Kosovo would benefit most from an instrument that would render "hard," objective results. Because NDI lacked the in-house capacity to create such a tool, the CF programs hired a consultant with a background in survey design, statistical analysis and public education campaigns.

Hiring the consultant did not, however, constitute a hands-off approach to creating the assessment tool. Members of the Albania and Kosovo teams and D.C. staff members had to work closely with the consultant.

From D.C., NDI provided the consultant with Civic Forum program information and described the needs to be addressed by the survey.

L From D.C. and the field, NDI commented on and helped revise multiple drafts of the survey. *What was the result?* Consultant, Field and D.C. staff members developed four thematic categories of questions:

Your discussion group

e.g. What is your primary interest in participating in the Civic Forum program?

(Circle all items that apply.)

- a) To gain participatory skills
- b) To cooperate with people holding different political views
- c) To understand how democracy works in a community
- d) To contribute to improvements in my community

Other (specify)

Attitudes about democracy

e.g. The only responsibility a citizen has in a democracy is to vote. Agree or Disagree

Knowledge of democratic principles

e.g. Democracies claiming to be “free and open societies” usually permit the following freedoms: (Circle all items that apply.)

- a) Speech
- b) Assembly
- c) Religious worship
- d) Media (Press, television, etc.)
- e) Right to vote
- f) Participation in the political process

Knowledge to action

e.g. What community activities have you participated in or are you participating in now? (Circle all items that apply.)

Participating in local NGO activities

Participating in domestic monitoring efforts
Attending commune/municipal council meetings
Serving on community committees
Participating in an agricultural organization
Participating in the Parent/Teacher Association
Talking to local politicians/officials
Writing to local politicians/officials
Other (specify):

L In the field, NDI assisted in fine-tuning the survey. *What did this mean?* Staff members reviewed the translated questionnaire and made corrections relevant to cultural context.

L In the field, NDI prepared for periodic administration of the survey. *What did this involve?* Staff members reviewed the procedure for assigning identification codes to discussion groups for the purpose of tracking trends among the different groups and disaggregating data when results are analyzed. Staff members learned how to administer the survey. This also included administration of the survey to non-participants serving as control groups.

L In the field, NDI will process and analyze data results. *What preparation did this require?* Selected staff members received training in: development of a variable list; data transfer and processing using specialized software and results analysis.

CF Albania and Kosovo now have a survey that they plan to conduct periodically. In addition, following each survey administration, focus groups will be used to elicit a deeper, qualitative analysis of particular themes revealed by the survey.

The first survey cycle will present a baseline of participants’ attitudes and knowledge. Each subsequent cycle, conducted with the same participants, will demonstrate change over time. At the end of the program, NDI will hold a set of still shots from which, upon comparison, changes or trends can be deduced. In support of this activity, USAID Albania’s Democracy and Governance Officer, Eric Richardson, commented during a meeting with NDI representatives, “If the process goes well, this will be a real contribution to the D&G efforts to assess the results of programs such as these [civic education leading to community-based advocacy] being implemented by NDI.”

Ideally, the lessons that Mary Margaret, Koebel and their teammates learn about survey research and program development can be applied to future programs in other places as well.

Both CF Albania and CF Kosovo will be reporting first round survey results at the beginning of September. For more information contact Tim Baker at tbaker@ndi.org or Kristen Wall at kwall@ndi.org.

Mary Margaret Dineen has managed NDI’s Civic Forum Program in Albania since 1999. She has extensive experience researching, designing and coordinating NGO civic education programs for youth as well as directing advocacy projects.

Koebel Price has managed NDI’s Civic Forum Program in Kosovo since 2000. He possesses over a decade of experience in community organizing, policy advocacy and legislative

lobbying. In a former incarnation, Koebel brushed elbows with stardom managing and promoting rock bands around the United States and Europe.

Focusing on Assessment in East Timor

Acknowledge the past

Saturday September 4 1999	‘After 24 years of occupation by Indonesia, the people of East Timor have voted overwhelmingly to become an independent nation...’ Seth Mydans, “In East Timor, Decisive Vote For a Break From Indonesia,” <u>The New York Times</u> .
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Sunday September 5 1999	‘Anti-independence militiamen intensify their violence after election results show East Timor residents voted overwhelmingly for independence from Indonesia...’ Seth Mydans, “Danger Rises as East Timor Faces Freedom,” <u>The New York Times</u> .
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...For immediate release...
Two democratization assessment missions conducted by NDI’s Asia Team in December 1999 and October 2000 reveal...

“The violence that followed the August referendum resulted in the displacement of more than 75 percent of the population and the destruction of over 70 percent of all private residences, public buildings and essential utilities.”
‘...In response, the United Nations Transitional Authority in East Timor (UNTAET) moved in to focus on humanitarian relief,

restoration of essential services and preparation of the country to assume self-governance.’

“Civic and political organizing were tightly controlled under Indonesian rule, therefore, East Timorese leaders and citizens alike have limited experience building or working through democratic institutions...[Hence] there is a widespread need for civic education, and it will be crucial to assist civic groups and political parties to understand the roles of East Timor’s new democratic institutions, including their own roles and functions and educate citizens as to the roles of these new institutions, as well as the rights and responsibilities that citizens possess in a democratic society....

“Civil and political society must be transformed from an underground network of political resistance to one that is open, transparent and democratic.”

Quotes are from the Asia Team’s response to a USAID RFA on East Timor.

Plan for the future and beyond

Thursday August 30 2001	The Constituent Assembly Election date is confirmed, marking an important point in the transition from United Nations to East Timorese self-governance.
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How did NDI decide to respond in light of the civic and voter education needs...a USAID-funded Civic Forum program.

Exhibiting exemplary planning and resourcefulness, Asia Team members first conducted a NED-funded focus group project that helped inform the development of

the (at that time) proposed Civic Forum program. In March 2001, the East Timor Team conducted 14 focus groups across East Timor. As planned, the focus groups helped achieve two immediate objectives: they promoted some dialogue among political parties about conflict avoidance and dispute resolution measures; and they provided the views and perceptions of East Timorese citizens regarding democracy and the transition process. Moreover, the focus groups also provided NDI with information needed to help organize the Civic Forum program. Specifically, the focus group results provided a baseline of East Timorese attitudes toward and experience with democracy. In turn, this information influenced the selection of Civic Forum discussion topics and decisions about how best to deliver the program.

Based on the initial focus group experience, the Asia Team also decided to build periodic focus groups into the Civic Forum program, as a means of tracking changes in citizen understanding and attitudes about democracy. Focus groups will be organized every six to eight months for the duration of the program.

The initial focus groups also had added benefits.

M The focus group process (small groups discussing issues in a roundtable setting) verified that the Civic Forum small group methodology was appropriate to East Timor.

M It allowed East Timor Resident Director Jim Della-Giacoma the opportunity to establish a pre-Civic Forum presence in different localities and meet some of the partners

who now assist in the implementation of the program.

In addition to the focus groups, the Asia Team enriched its body of baseline information by incorporating results from a national survey conducted by the Asia Foundation. As Jim has stated, "These survey findings confirmed many of the conclusions drawn from the focus groups and reinforced the validity of the focus group research among some previously skeptical local political actors."

In sum, the focus groups have provided Jim and Resident Program Director, Tarikul Ghani, with useful baseline and program development information. As this example demonstrates, savvy planning and foresight can contribute to a regular assessment process and the promise of future information to feed reporting and program development needs.

* For broader detail concerning NDI's approach to conducting focus groups, please review Appendix 3 of *Increasing Citizen Participation through Advocacy Efforts* at the following Access Democracy website: http://chaos.partners-intl.net/NDI/library/1170_citpart_advocacy122000_4_ax3.pdf

This article borrows language from the Asia Team's 2001 proposal of Civic Forum-East Timor.

Jim Della-Giacoma joined NDI full-time to become NDI East Timor's Resident Director after working with the Institute as a consultant for NDI in 1998 and then in early 2001. (If you thought his last name was a bit of a stunner, get this: he holds, Australian, Italian and Irish citizenship and is a US resident!)

Jim sports an impressive resume, including work as a foreign correspondent and as desk officer for East Timor with the Department of Political Affairs in the UN during the 1999 Referendum period. In his spare time, Jim likes climbing active volcanoes and traveling to remote parts of Indonesia. He has climbed more than a dozen volcanoes.

Tarikul Ghani joined NDI in 1996, has worked in Cambodia, Kazakhstan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and now in his current position as Resident Program Director in East Timor. Ghani (as he prefers to be called by his colleagues) is a founding member and the former Executive Director of Fair Election Monitoring Alliance (FEMA) - Bangladesh's premier election monitoring organization. During his work with FEMA, he organized several domestic election monitoring operations and ran a range of other civil society programs. Tarikul likes deluxe scotch and can ask for it in English, Bangla, Urdu or Hindi.

Post-Campaign Evaluation and Planning Meetings in Bulgaria

On June 17, 2001, Bulgarians voted in the first regularly scheduled parliamentary elections since 1989. In an effort to encourage informed citizen participation in the election process, NDI supported the voter education and GOTV activities of six local NGOs and two media outlets. Working in coordination as part of the *Ti Izbirash* (You Choose) coalition, the local organizations conducted more than 200 voter education and GOTV events targeting specific

constituencies in 53 cities across Bulgaria. In addition to financial assistance, NDI provided the coalition members with guidance on campaign planning, materials development, volunteer recruitment and media relations. As a result, coalition members organized Bulgaria's first voter education phone banks, garnered media coverage of many events and refined their messages using focus groups and other forms of research.

After the elections, NDI organized a discussion session with *Ti Izbirash* activists to determine what worked during the campaign and what direction the groups might want to go in the future. This process included a review of the program objectives, an analysis of the activities and some additional training on research and targeting. During the session, NDI also had the activists fill out an evaluation form that asked for explanations about: which communication techniques worked best; what could have been improved; the relationship with NDI; and their most memorable personal experiences. Through the discussion process and evaluation forms, NDI was able to determine that the program succeeded in meeting the main objectives of strengthening the voter education and communication capacities of local groups. At the same time, several lessons came to light about managing multiple sub-grants and supporting ad-hoc coalitions. For instance, although the sub-grant process worked well enough for the local groups to conduct their activities, the process would have benefited from more time spent on forming clear expectations between NDI and local partners, and more time devoted to helping the partners develop better reporting and accounting procedures.

When working with local partners on any type of program, periodic discussions with the partners about what is working and what is not can help NDI determine whether program objectives are being achieved.

Methods that Make You Think Outside the Box

The most descriptive expression of an individual's viewpoint isn't always the most verbose. Sometimes a picture can better convey emotions or attitudes than words. This is especially true considering that drawing encourages an individual to step outside of a routine analytical thought process and examine views and values from a different perspective. Although rather informal, the method of drawing pictures or illustrations can be used to provide baseline information or qualitative evidence supporting conclusions about a program's influence on participants' attitudes. Drawing can also be an effective assessment technique when dealing with illiterate populations or individuals who feel uncomfortable speaking publicly. Of course, when contemplating the use of any assessment tool, the audience and local cultural sensibilities should be considered. Breaking out the white paper and crayons probably wouldn't fly with a group of parliamentarians.

In a 1998 evaluation of NDI's Civic Forum Program in the West Bank/Gaza, an independent firm solicited drawings as part of research to help measure attitudes about democracy. Consultants asked participants and non-

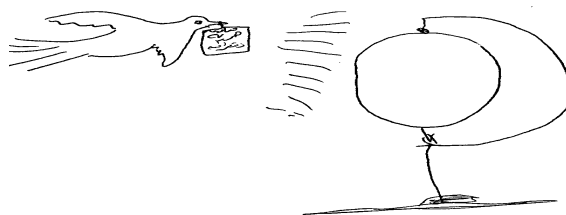
control groups) to draw a picture of the first thing that came to mind when thinking of the word "democracy." The study involved 18 focus groups and included respondents from various Palestinian communities. Eight of the groups were comprised of Civic Forum participants and the other ten groups included non-participants: teachers, students and members of civil society organizations.

The pictures revealed a striking difference in perception and attitude towards democracy between those who had participated in Civic Forum and those who had not. Learning about democracy appeared to have introduced a new outlook and method of problem analysis for Civic Forum participants. On the other hand, Palestinians who had not experienced the Civic Forum or civic education appeared to retain a more traditional mind-set.

Here are two examples of drawings by a Civic Forum participant and a non-participant, accompanied by the respondents' descriptions:

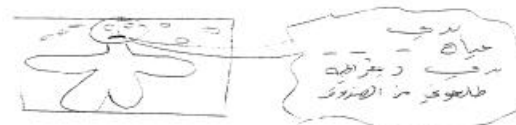
A picture drawn by a participant:

"Civic Forum shines like the sun on topics like democracy and our rights for all of us. It sheds light on these things."



A picture drawn by a non-participant:

"This is a child crying and saying something: What I want is I want life and I want democracy and take me out of this box. Tyranny is the school and the people around us."



For more information regarding drawing as a form of qualitative research in Viewpoints Research Ltd's report, please contact Aaron Aaron@ndi.org or Ashley Aorton@ndi.org.

Former Partners... Where Are They Now?

It is always affirming when former partners or trainees report on sustained success that resulted from NDI support. In addition to professional gratification, these reports provide an indication of the longer-term impact.

Recently in Cairo, MENA Team's Deputy Director, Heba El-Shazli, met with the director of NDI's former sub-grantee, the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights (ECWR). Nehad Abu El Komsan could not say enough about past assistance provided by NDI. According to her, 'The ECWR is where it is today thanks to capacity-building programs, training of trainers and participation in international election

observation trips. All of the NDI experience that was transferred remains invaluable.'

The ECWR emerged as an organization following NDI-backed voter education and election monitoring activities during Egypt's 1996 Parliamentary Elections. Since that time, the Center's activities have grown to encompass civic education and organizing of women in impoverished areas of metropolitan Cairo to influence public policymaking. The Center also holds a training college for aspiring female political leaders. Building on its success and reputation (two of the ECWR's twenty-five graduates won parliamentary seats in the last elections) the organization is currently working with 75 potential women candidates and receives training requests from members of parliament and political party activists.

Similarly, NDI has seen the Center for Civic Initiatives (CCI) in Bosnia evolve since 1998 out of an NDI civic education program to an independent organization that helps educate and organize citizens around public policy issues. CCI also serves as the leader of the largest, multi-ethnic NGO network in the country. At the same time, the group is beginning to work alongside NDI to help hold training sessions for parliamentarians and young political leaders. In the past three years, CCI has grown from a recipient of NDI technical assistance to a co-implementing partner.

Maintaining communication and occasionally checking in with former partners is a simple method of gauging longer-term program impact.

Suggestions for building an assessment process into a program:

Make a commitment to an ongoing process of assessment and program improvement.

Start with clear, realistic and measurable program objectives based on accurate baseline information.

Define a programmatic beginning, middle and end, and define benchmarks that denote progress (e.g., effective message development and delivery, creation of newsletters, development of membership lists, door-to-door campaign activity, recruitment of women members, coalition viability, candidates elected, campaign plan developed, etc.)

Based on the objectives, benchmarks and activities, determine the specific types of qualitative and quantitative information that need to be gathered. For example, if the objective is strengthening an organization's capacity to recruit new members, it may be necessary to monitor the number of new members, as well as analyze the quality of the membership recruitment process.

Develop a monitoring plan.

Involve program participants in the process of monitoring and measuring progress.

Create a system to analyze and distribute information.

Feed information into ongoing program development.

21 *Internet Development Research Reporting Service*
(This site contains a searchable online collection of development research.):

<http://www.id21.org>

Sites on Public Hearings

City of Austin Public Hearing and Participation:

<http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/development/pubhearings.htm>

Fairfax County Public Hearings:

<http://www.co.fairfax.va.us/gov/bo/public.htm>

The People's Commission on Environment and Development in India:

http://www.pcedindia.com/pcedindia/peoplescomm/advocacy_a.htm

Sites including strategies for Media Advocacy

Helping.org (ideas for advocacy using the Internet):

<http://www.helping.org/nonprofit/advocacy.adp>

The Advocacy Institute:

<http://www.advocacy.org/pubs/mediaalt.html>

Center for Community Change:

<http://www.communitychange.org/media.htm>

Join Together:

http://www.jointogether.org/sa/action/strategy/communications/media_advocacy/

Empowerment Zone:

<http://www.empowermentzone.com/mediatip.txt>

The Civic Update is a quarterly production of NDI's Citizen Participation Team. We ask that you please send any comments or suggestions you may have to Citizen Participation Team

Super Cyber Sites

Members Aaron Azelton
(Aaron@ndi.org)
or Ashley Orton
(Aorton@ndi.org).

Also, we are always on the look
out for insightful articles to
include in the newsletter, so
please do not
hesitate to send us any ideas or
submissions for future issues. The
next Update will focus on
working with coalitions of civic
groups and activists.

Thanks and we hope you found
this newsletter of interest.

For back issues of the Civic
Update refer to:
<http://www.ndi.org/civup.htm>

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General

Citizen Participation Team
with acknowledgement to the
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