



# NDI Reports

NO. 2, 2002

## MIDDLE EAST

### A Strategy for Democratization in the Middle East

Unending and often sterile debates about the compatibility of democracy and Islam threaten to distract from the real democratization challenge — how can the international community support the development of indigenous forms of democracy throughout the Arab world and in so doing, establish a foundation for cooperation in pursuit of peace and freedom that will far outlast any current foreign policy imperatives?

The challenge is to support the development of a political environment that forces any form of extremism, religious or otherwise, to retreat to the margins. The moderate political center, likely the majority of the population in most Arab countries, has long been deprived of a democratic middle ground that could offer a buffer between the extremes of autocratic regimes and religious fundamentalism.

Some Islamic political activists, recognizing the opportunities for organizing generated by autocratic and ineffective regimes, fill a political and economic vacuum by providing social services, promoting cultural purity and organizing clubs for the disaffected. With the mosque as a powerful political pulpit, religious leaders supply alternative political discourse, immune, it would seem, from the repressive machinery of government.

Moderate elements within Arab states, whose liberalizing messages are often feared by repressive authorities — respected Egyptian academic Saad Eddin Ibrahim, jailed for mild criticisms of past Egyptian electoral practices, is a case in point — find themselves squeezed between the State and the religious extremists, both sides fearing that their power base is threatened by a more open political system.

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In this issue of NDI Reports, we highlight two of NDI's programs in the Middle East and North Africa. These programs, in Morocco and the West Bank, point to the importance of supporting the efforts of democrats in potentially volatile political environments as an antidote to political and religious extremism.

With citizens lacking the normal venues for political participation, the radical religious alternative becomes increasingly attractive — not so much because the average Arab citizen rejects the principles of democracy, but because the embrace of more radical strains of Islam has become an assertion of identity and a cry of protest against corrupt and autocratic governments that provide little hope for a better life.

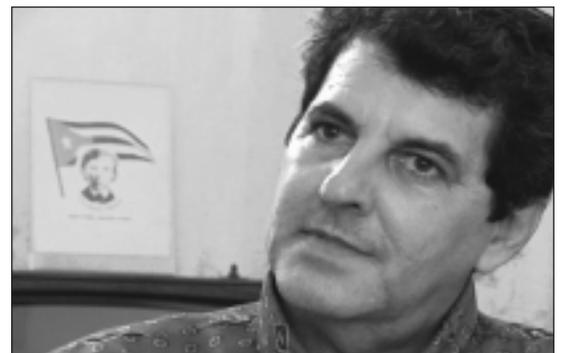
## 2002 DEMOCRACY AWARDS

### 2002 NDI Democracy Awards

Varela Project leader Oswaldo Payá Sardiñas of Cuba, and the Organization of American States (OAS) have been selected to receive NDI's 15th annual W. Averell Harriman Democracy Awards. The Awards will be presented in a ceremony in Washington D.C. on September 30.

Payá will be recognized for his leadership of the Varela Project, an initiative calling for a referendum in Cuba on open elections, freedom of speech, freedom for political prisoners and free enterprise. The Varela Project draws upon a provision in the Cuban constitution that enables citizens to introduce legislative initiatives when accompanied by 10,000 signatures. More than 11,000 signatures were submitted to the Cuban

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Varela Project leader Oswaldo Payá sits in front of a placard illustrating the Cuban flag and a portrait of Felix Varela, the 19th Century priest and independence leader for whom the Project is named.

## MIDDLE EAST

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Knowing that indigenous and independent democratic forces do exist throughout the Middle East and that religious extremism cannot prosper in an environment of greater freedom where political speech is encouraged and rulers are held accountable, a democratization strategy for the region emerges.

Such a strategy is based on identifying and strengthening the moderate middle — professionals, academics, women, students and shopkeepers, who, if given a chance, would play a central role in a democratic system. Working with these and other indigenous democrats, including civil society leaders, human rights activists, reform-minded politicians and modernists within the Islamic movement, the international community can help provide the skills and linkages they need to counter the entrenched extremes.

Political transitions that force authoritarian structures to open, however temporary,

may provide a wedge to open further democratic opportunities. New parliaments and local councils may challenge the status quo. The role of women, traditionally outsiders in the political process, can be strengthened. The fallout from political transitions and upheavals can also create openings for change — witness the succession of modern, young monarchs in Jordan and Morocco, or calls by Palestinians for political reform after the recent Israeli military incursion.

Each situation naturally requires specific democratization strategies based on local needs and imperatives. For example, Morocco, with its trade linkages to the European Union, must modernize commercial law and root out petty corruption. Yemen, unable to exert central control over its hinterlands has formed a national parliament to provide voice to local sheiks and power brokers. Palestinians, fed up with corruption, look for leadership renewal and better local government. The ruling Bahraini Sunni minority, faced with increasing unrest

among the Shiite majority, has chosen limited forms of democracy as a means to promote political stability.

There are several recent signs that this strategic approach can work. For example, as noted on the following page, Bethlehem, faced with the task of restoring infrastructure and bringing social assistance to the beleaguered population after the recent standoff at the Church of the Nativity, formed an emergency committee that includes local officials and municipal councilors but also representatives of business, labor, the church and community organizations. Working together, they hope to provide citizen assistance in an accountable and transparent manner and by so doing, deny extremists a foothold in this traditionally tolerant municipality. The small amount of funding provided by the international community for this effort could pay huge dividends through the demonstration effect of what this model of democratic decision-making can offer the rest of the Palestinian territories.

## BAHRAIN

### A New Political Opening in the Gulf

Soon after coming to power in 1999, King Hamad reversed decades of suppression of political dissidents and repealed emergency state security laws and courts. In a February 2001 plebiscite, Bahrainis overwhelmingly approved the National Action Charter, a series of wide-ranging proposals for democratic reforms. Last February, the King introduced an amended constitution that established a bicameral legislature, and set the stage for municipal elections in May, and parliamentary elections in October. For the first time, women were to be eligible to vote and run for office.

Since the approval of the National Action Charter, however, Bahraini political and civic activists have sharply criticized certain constitutional amendments and government decrees which, in their view, threaten further democratic progress. They point out that political parties are still banned and assert that the newly elected parliament and municipal councils will have little independent authority or meaningful power. Despite the criticisms, these activists say that they remain committed to participating in the country's new political process.



NDI President Kenneth Wollack meets with King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa during an NDI delegation visit to Bahrain in late June.

Since March, NDI has been working with more than 50 political and civic societies, and has trained candidates, notably women, running in the municipal and parliamentary elections. Consultations have also been held with the government on possible future programs with the legislature.

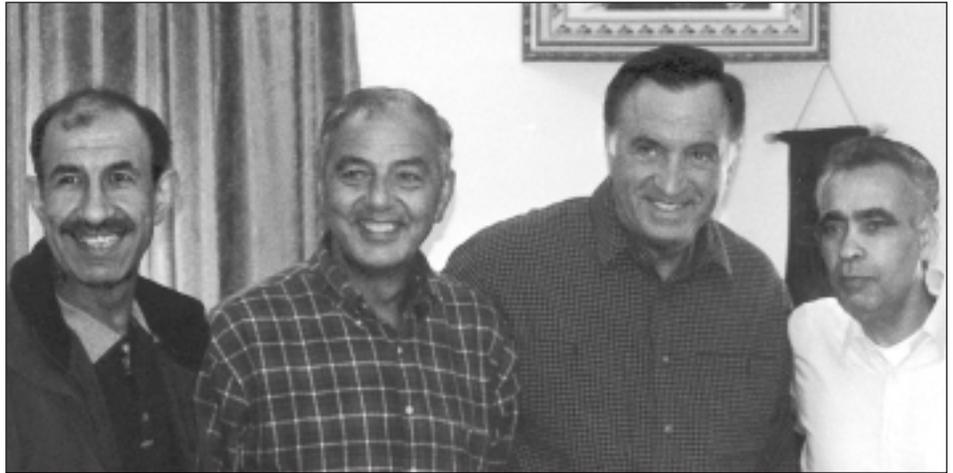
## Bethlehem Emergency Committee — Seeking Democratic Solutions in a Time of Crisis

Eighteen months of the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict have devastated local economies in the Palestinian territories. Since February, the crisis has intensified, and the increased violence has led to further deterioration of civilian and governmental Palestinian institutions. Many such institutions, particularly local authorities, are at the brink of collapse, and have been left to fend for themselves.

One of these local institutions is the government of the municipality of Bethlehem, which, following the Israeli military incursions, has responded with a series of reform initiatives aimed at addressing its citizens' needs democratically. What has emerged is the Bethlehem Emergency Committee (BEC), an *ad-hoc* citizen committee convened by the Governor of Bethlehem to respond to the pressing humanitarian, psychological, infrastructure and social problems the residents of Bethlehem now face.

The Committee, comprised of 30 local leaders from the business, labor, local government, civil society, tourism, academic, religious and health services communities, is unique in that it represents virtually all sectors of Palestinian society in Bethlehem and the surrounding villages. The efforts of the BEC would normally be the province of a few functionaries such as the police chief, civil defense chief, Red Crescent, civil engineers, and governor's office — now they have a broader civic component, including a civilian committee chair.

With inadequate resources and little experience with emergency preparedness, meeting community needs in a coordinated and consistent manner has proven to be a formidable challenge. In March, NDI traveled to the West Bank to determine how the Institute could be of assistance. Members of the BEC requested NDI's support in building the organizational capacity and technical expertise of the Committee so that it would be better equipped to respond



**Art Agnos (center right), former mayor of San Francisco, meets with the Governor of Bethlehem (right) and other city officials.**

to citizen needs in a responsive and democratic manner.

In April, NDI organized a trip to Bethlehem by former San Francisco Mayor Art Agnos who, because of his leadership following the 1989 San Francisco earthquake, was well qualified to advise on how to engage local authorities and citizens in emergency recovery plans.

In an intense succession of meetings over four days, Agnos, accompanied by NDI Deputy Regional Director for the Middle East, Heba El-Shazli, helped the BEC draw up plans in three key areas: emergency management, strategic planning and communications. They assisted the BEC in developing the rudimentary components of a plan to further clarify the vision, mission, and resources of the com-

mittee; they discussed the foundations of an effective citizen committee; and they shared methods for facilitating effective communications between citizens and their local government during emergency situations. They also advised the BEC how to implement elementary procedures for emergency management to ensure that assistance comes in a timely manner and is given to those most in need of services. These topics will be followed up in subsequent NDI activities in the coming months.

In addition to meeting the emergency needs of Bethlehem's citizens, the Committee can help strengthen democratic voices in the city. If citizens of Bethlehem see that their local authority can effectively reach out to them and include them in rebuilding efforts, it not only demonstrates the government's commitment to democracy, but also limits the appeal of undemocratic, radical alternatives.

If successful, the BEC, while initially convened to respond to a community crisis, could provide a model for cooperation between local government structures and community organizations, and greatly enhance citizen participation in democratic local government in the West Bank and Gaza.

*“In addition to meeting the emergency needs of Bethlehem’s citizens, the Committee can help strengthen democratic voices in the city.”*

## Morocco Prepares for Parliamentary Elections

There was great optimism leading up to Morocco's first direct parliamentary elections in 1997. In a surprise development, the opposition Socialist party won the election, and formed the new government. The emergence of what Moroccans call the "government of alternance" represented a new era of political openness in the country. Nevertheless, persisting concerns about irregularities in the polls and subsequent economic problems have led to growing public disenchantment with the country's political process.

King Mohammed VI has announced that elections for the Chamber of Representatives will be held in September. Historic reforms of the electoral law, including the guarantee of 30 parliamentary seats for women, should help make Morocco's elections more open and participatory.

The successful conduct of the September elections will be an opportunity to restore public confidence in the government and in the political process. NDI has embarked on a comprehensive program of support for the elections, building on a foundation of the Institute's years of work with Moroccan partners.

Not surprisingly, politics in Morocco are dominated by men. Only three out of the 595 members of the Moroccan parliament are women — the worst record in Africa in terms of female representation in a national parliament. The recent agreement among political parties to reserve 30 seats for women on the national list has been viewed as a major breakthrough.

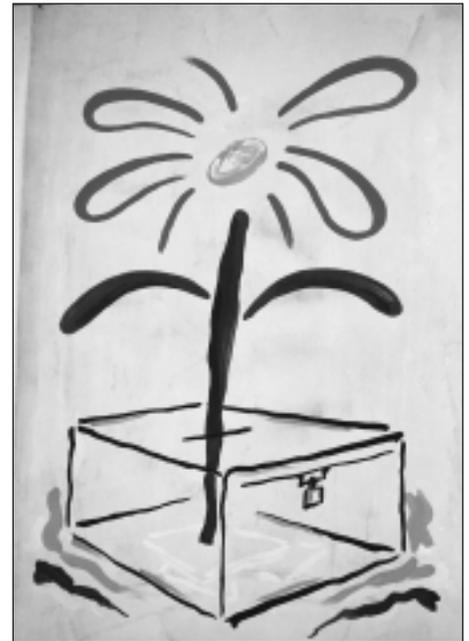
For the last three years, NDI has been working with local groups to increase women's participation in the political arena. In preparation for

upcoming elections, NDI has conducted a series of training schools for nearly 100 women from 13 political parties who wish to run for parliament. Armed with newly acquired skills, these women now have an opportunity to bring their voices and their issues to the forefront of Moroccan politics, and to play a more meaningful role in the political life of the country.

NDI is also conducting a voter education campaign that seeks to raise voter awareness and participation through television advertising, posters, seminars and a collaboration with one of the country's best-known public art schools.

Other Institute programs are helping political parties prepare for the elections, supporting nonpartisan domestic election monitors and providing training for journalists who will cover the campaign and the polls.

*In addition to these election-related programs, NDI has been working with the parliament and civil service to improve their technical skills and establish a comprehensive code of ethics. The Institute plans to continue its involvement in Morocco following the upcoming elections.*



Top Moroccan art students produce their vision of voting in an NDI-sponsored program. The paintings and sculptures are now part of a traveling exhibit throughout Morocco.

Once the new Chamber of Representatives has been elected, NDI will implement a program to support the new parliament and also will begin work in preparation for local elections, expected to be held in June 2003.



Participants in NDI's campaign training schools for prospective women candidates for the September 2002 parliamentary elections in Morocco.

## Building Cross-Border Connections in Central and Eastern Europe

More than 10 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe have secured democratically elected governments and have achieved greater political stability. However, inter-ethnic enmity, poor economic performance and weak government institutions have retarded democratic development in the region—particularly in war-torn south-eastern Europe.

Integration of the region into European and transatlantic political, economic and security structures is seen by many as essential if Central and Eastern Europe's transition to democracy is to last. Such integration will help to open up economic markets, diffuse inter-ethnic conflict and provide models and support for democratic development. To see the integration process through, the countries of the region must be able to work together on solving common problems.

NDI has developed a regional initiative to bring emerging democratic leaders from Central and Eastern Europe together to share ideas and experiences, to learn how different countries have addressed challenges to

democratic development, and to learn how to strengthen the relationships between governments and their citizens.

Two leadership seminars were held in Warsaw earlier this year. Young political leaders with a demonstrated commitment to democratic values were selected to participate from 10 countries in which

levels and brought together delegations of young political party activists from Albania, Kosovo, Romania, Serbia and Slovakia. At the second seminar, women politicians from a range of political parties in Bosnia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia and Montenegro developed coordinated regional and national measures to combat human trafficking, a growing problem in the region.



Youth leaders from Europe gather for an NDI anti-corruption seminar in Warsaw, Poland.

NDI conducts programs in the region. The first seminar focused on the problems of corruption at the regional and national

NDI enlisted specialists from the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Transparency International and other organizations to provide expertise on anti-corruption and anti-trafficking issues. NDI trainers assisted participants in devising political strategies that they, as elected officials and political activists, can use to address these challenges.

The seminars have generated a series of initiatives, including: an education campaign by members of the Bulgarian parliament and civic groups for young women on anti-trafficking; an initiative by Slovak political activists to build public support for anti-corruption efforts; and an upcoming meeting of young Serbian and Kosovar political activists to work together on anti-corruption issues.

### NDI BOARD

#### NDI WELCOMES FOUR NEW MEMBERS TO ITS BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

**Sam Gejdenson** of Connecticut. Former ranking member of the International Relations Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives.

**Constance J. Milstein** of New York. Director of Emigrant Savings Bank; Principal of Milstein Properties and of Milstein Ventures; Board Member of Refugees International and U.N. Watch.

**Susan E. Rice** of Washington D.C. Former Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs and Senior Director of African Affairs at the National Security Council (NSC).

**Arturo Valenzuela** of Washington D.C. Director of the Center for Latin American Studies at Georgetown University; former Senior Director for Inter-American Affairs at the National Security Council and Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs.

## 2002 DEMOCRACY AWARDS

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National Assembly, and today the number of signatures has risen to over 30,000.

"Inspired by the efforts of democratic forces in Chile prior to the 1988 plebiscite, the Varela Project seeks to promote peaceful political reform," said NDI Chairman Madeleine

Albright. "With its roots entirely within the island, the Project presents a positive message for democratic change and reflects universal values and principles."

On the announcement of the Award, Payá said, "This award is not a tribute to me, but to the thousands of Cubans who for many years have fought for human rights and democracy."



OAS Secretary General César Gaviria

The OAS will be honored for its growing role in protecting and promoting democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean. It is the only intergovernmental organization whose Charter calls on member states to "exercise representative democracy." The OAS also has agencies tasked with supporting democracy, including the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the Unit for the Promotion of Democracy.

NDI also will recognize the leadership role of OAS Secretary General César Gaviria, who will accept the Award on behalf of the Organization. Gaviria has



been Secretary General of the OAS since 1994, and during his tenure he has fostered institutional changes that have reinvigorated the inter-American agenda. He served as president of Colombia from 1990 to 1994.

The W. Averell Harriman Democracy Award is NDI's highest honor, presented annually to individuals and organizations dedicated to democracy and human rights.

*The next issue of the newsletter will contain a report of the award ceremony.*

## NAMIBIA

### Mobile Training Unit Brings Parliament to All Regions of Namibia

After 23 years of war, Namibia gained its independence in 1990. Its new government faced many challenges, most notably how to build new democratic institutions to replace the discriminatory and exclusive political structures that characterized the colonial era.

Twelve years later, this small country now serves as a model for many of its larger neighbors in the region for attempting to create an accountable national legislature. In 1995 the government declared its commitment to increasing citizen participation in the legislative process in its *Agenda for Change*. It began programs to increase public



The Mobile Training Unit brings the Namibian Parliament to all regions of the country. During the day the bus is used to train members of local authorities on how to access legislative information; after hours, citizens of all ages are given an introduction to computers, the Internet, and basic civic education.

participation in the national budget, and introduced comprehensive anti-corruption legislation.

Earlier this year, an information technology program was launched to address the still-significant disconnect between the capital and the regions. With technical assistance from NDI, and with computers donated by Hewlett-Packard/Compaq and Microsoft, the government has built a Mobile Training Unit — a computer training facility housed on a bus, designed to operate in areas where there is computer access, but no adequate training facilities. In recent months the bus has traveled

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## Strengthening Parliamentary and Civic Involvement in Poverty Reduction

In late 1999, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund adopted a new approach to the challenge of reducing poverty in low-income countries. At its core is the use of poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs), which are developed by governments with civic participation and lay out each government's plans for reducing poverty. These PRSPs are used by the international financial institutions as the basis of debt relief and concessional lending in roughly 70 developing countries around the world.

In many low-income countries, there is a close relationship between economic and political development. Where elected governments fail to deliver improved economic conditions, there is a risk of losing popular support for the democratic system itself. Poverty alleviation issues are often among the most effective organizing tools for citizen advocacy — health, sanitation, access to clean water, employment and education opportunities are issues that citizens care deeply about and are willing to organize around. And in countries where there is little room for political debate, poverty alleviation discussions can provide a safe space for citizen participation and advocacy.



**Niger National Assembly President Mahamane Ousmane (right) presents NDI Resident Office Director Martin LaVoie with Niger's highest honor conferred on a foreign national for the work that NDI, the United Nations Development Programme and USAID have done to promote citizen input into the government's poverty reduction efforts.**

To date, the PRSP process has helped to increase civic involvement in the development of poverty reduction policies in some countries. Too often, however, the process has bypassed national parliaments, even though they typically have the constitutional responsibility to enact the budgets needed to implement the PRSP and to conduct oversight of government poverty reduction programs.

With funding from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), NDI is conducting pilot programs in three African countries to strengthen legislative

involvement in the PRSP process. With NDI support, the House and Senate Poverty Alleviation Committees of the Nigerian National Assembly recently held a joint hearing regarding the PRSP process. The committees made a number of recommendations to strengthen legislative involvement in the process and to obtain additional input from the state and local levels on regional priorities in poverty reduction.

In Niger, NDI is supporting a series of radio call-in shows facilitated by members of parliament on the various components of the country's poverty reduction strategy. In Malawi, with funding from USAID and the British and Danish aid agencies, NDI is conducting a parliamentary and civil society program that focuses on monitoring and overseeing the national budget and the delivery of services that are most critical to poverty reduction.

*NDI is in the process of developing a series of resources and tools for legislatures to increase their involvement in, and their capacity to support, poverty reduction efforts. NDI is also working with the World Bank Group to develop an Annex to their PRSP Sourcebook, addressing the issue of strengthening parliamentary involvement in poverty reduction.*

## NAMIBIA

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throughout the country, spending a week in each of Namibia's 13 regions.

In each region, trainers on the bus showed regional and local government officials and members of civic organizations how to use the Internet to participate in the legislative process. Trainees received special instruction on how to access the web sites of the Parliament and the Ministry of Regional and Local Government and Housing, which provide information about current legislation and regulations, and allow for

responses from concerned citizens.

During lunch breaks and evenings, the trainers would gather people from the community for an informal demonstration of the Internet and parliament website, and to talk about civic participation, advocacy, constitutional rights to participate in the legislative process, the role of parliament and other topics. For many citizens, this informal aspect of the program was their introduction to civic education.

By the end of the training sessions, even computer novices had gained the

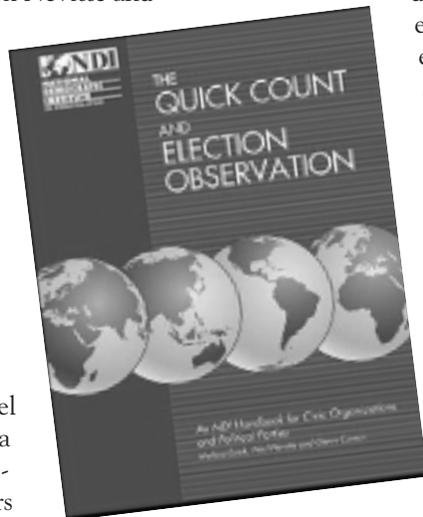
necessary skills to access information about parliamentary activities and to send e-mail messages to Members of Parliament and government officials on issues of concern to them. They also were provided with information about how to access computers in their areas so that they can continue to use technology to interact with the national government.

*Besides its support of the Mobile Training Unit, NDI has helped build the Namibian parliament's web site and provided computer training for parliamentarians and their staff in the capital city of Windhoek.*

## NDI Publishes Quick Count Handbook

A new publication from NDI, *The Quick Count and Election Observation: An NDI Handbook*, is designed for civic organizations and political parties that seek to monitor elections and promote transparency and accountability in the political process. The 182-page handbook, co-authored by NDI advisors Melissa Estok, Neil Nevitte and Glenn Cowan, provides an overview of how quick counts have been conducted worldwide and gives a step-by-step explanation of how to organize an election observation effort from the planning stages through election day and afterwards.

A “quick count,” or parallel vote tabulation (PVT), is a powerful method for monitoring elections. Observers from political parties and civic groups watch the voting and counting processes at selected polling stations, record key information on standardized forms and report their findings to a central data collection center. Quick count



methodology is used to evaluate the overall quality of the election day processes and to project, or verify, official election results.

Since 1988, NDI has supported the development of quick counts worldwide, many of which have been at the center of dramatic political events. They have exposed attempts to steal elections, thus helping to set the stage for popular defense of civil and political rights, as happened in Panama in 1989, the Philippines in 1986 and Serbia in 2000. They have deterred those who might have been tempted to alter electoral outcomes, as in the 1988 Chilean presidential plebiscite and in the first round of Peru’s 2000 elections; and they have allowed candidates to accept surprise electoral losses, as happened in Bulgaria’s 1990 elections. Quick count

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results have also allayed the concerns of the electorate when the announcements of official tabulations were greatly delayed, as was the case in Indonesia’s 1999 national elections.

For more information on NDI’s programs and publications, please visit our website at [www.ndi.org](http://www.ndi.org)



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