



A newsletter of citizen participation programs worldwide

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This Civic Update looks at citizen participation programs involving universities. The programs highlighted in this edition can serve as examples and ideas for future NDI programming.

The next Civic Update will feature NDI efforts to help local organizations develop citizen surveys and other tools for informing their organizing and advocacy campaigns.

MAKING UNIVERSITY CONNECTIONS



Universities can be home to large, politically aware and energetic groups of individuals. University faculty often have extensive knowledge of politics and a full range of policy issues. Additionally, university students are often looking for ways to actively express themselves and influence decision making. In many instances, universities can also serve as neutral ground for the meeting of rival political factions or other opposing groups. For these reasons, universities can be a place to find program partners and to organize events.

This issue of Civic Update examines some of NDI's relationships with university students, administrators and faculty. The three feature arti-

cles focus on student advocacy efforts in Kazakhstan, a legislative internship program in Croatia, and a presidential debate in East Timor. In addition, there are brief discussions of university student participation in Ecuadorian domestic election monitoring efforts, student voter education and anti-corruption art and film competitions in Morocco, and a NGO Management training program in Indonesia.

The programs highlighted in this issue serve as examples of the valuable role universities can play in NDI programming; however, this is by no means an exhaustive list of the ways NDI has or could work with university partners.

KAZAKH STUDENTS TAKE ACTIVISM TO NEW HEIGHTS

Youth Information Service of Kazakhstan (YISK) has become a strong voice for that nation's university students. NDI has worked with YISK over the past few years to increase YISK's advocacy capabilities. Since 2001, NDI has provided technical assistance to YISK on a number of different campaigns.

One campaign focused on improving conditions in the nation's universities. With the transition from Soviet rule, the university system has now become tuition-based instead of relying completely on state funds. Currently, most Kazakhstani students pay for college. University administrators, however, have been slow to realize that tuition-paying students expect certain services and high quality facilities in exchange for tuition. Students' complaints have included the lack of shower facilities in some dormitories and poor classroom heating that forces students to attend classes dressed in winter coats, hats, and mittens.

Through the YISK campaign, students sought to upgrade decrepit and unsanitary conditions in dormitories, bathrooms and cafeterias. It began with roundtable discussions and forums with university directors, and the gathering of student petitions. By March of 2002, 18,000 students had signed the petitions. As YISK members met resistance to their demands, they undertook a media campaign using vivid photographs of the poor conditions in order to increase pressure on university administrators.



Photo compliments of the Eurasia Foundation

YISK members meet to discuss the organization's activism activities

"This campaign resulted in tangible improvements, including long needed repairs to elevators at Semey University and better laundry facilities at Almaty University."

This campaign resulted in tangible improvements, including long needed repairs to elevators at Semey University and better laundry facilities at Almaty University. In addition, through YISK's successful use of the media in its campaign, university administrators are becoming increasingly accountable to the students.

NDI has also worked with YISK on an advocacy campaign against a proposed Youth Law. The proposed law would establish a youth congress to make recommendations to government concerning state policies on youth and would control all government youth funding. The draft law would severely limit the ability of groups like YISK to advocate for students and the policies that concern them. In response, YISK organized a public hearing at the Kazakhstani Press Club that was attended by lawmakers, YISK members, and the media. As a result of this hearing, YISK representatives were invited to participate in the parliamentary working committee that is responsible for drafting the law.

Most recently, NDI and YISK activists worked together to improve the country's university accreditation process. The existing process is prone to corruption as substandard universities can purchase their credentials. YISK is demanding a seat on the national accreditation board in an effort to make the process more transparent and to

improve the universities. Additionally, they are recommending amendments to the accreditation process that would better reflect qualitative assessments of the universities.

As part of this initiative, in the spring of 2003 YISK polled 10,000 current students in 14 cities to provide the organization's own university ranking system. An independent commission ensured the transparency of student ratings by overseeing the polling. NDI assisted YISK in developing the polling questionnaire, which focused on a wide range of topics including the quality of teaching, computer access, the quality of facilities, and employment assistance services. On March 25, 2003, YISK released the university rankings in an event well attended and covered by Kazakh radio, television, and newspapers.

The YISK efforts demonstrate the constructive advocacy role students can play. The skills YISK leaders have gained through their work with NDI can guide other future advocacy efforts on or off campus. YISK's leaders have successfully mobilized large groups of students to support their initiatives. YISK provides the students who have participated in its activities with the opportunity to learn by doing. This experience will remain with the students as they assume their position as their country's next generation of leaders. These efforts demonstrate the strong role students can play in promoting governmental accountability and transparency in the provision of social services.

For more information about NDI's program in Kazakhstan, please contact Charity Fain, cfain@ndi.org

TECH SAVVY STUDENTS KEY TO ECUADORIAN ELECTION MONITORING



University students have come to play a prominent role in a number of NDI sponsored domestic election monitoring efforts. One such effort was conducted with partner *Participación*

Ciudadana – Ecuador (PCE) during the country's elections in October and November of 2002. PCE recruited more than 3,500 volunteers for election observations and "quick count" statistical prediction of electoral results. Students from the *Politécnica del Litoral* were responsible for data entry at the Guayaquil call center, while their peers from the School of Information Science at the *Universidad Católica de Quito* ran the Quito call center.

These students took calls from election observers in the field and recorded the data on a specialized form posted on the Internet. Once all of the data was collected, an analyst was able to evaluate the election results and make the quick count prognos-



Photo compliments of Erica Breth

tifications. The success of PCE's monitoring depended on the ability of these students to work accurately and rapidly. At times the call centers were receiving over 500 calls per hour from election observers in the field.

Omar Simón, one of PCE's election monitoring organizers, said that "very few of the students had previously participated in political activity." However, he feels they played an integral part in PCE's electoral observation and quick count success.

Recent domestic election monitoring programs in Macedonia and Montenegro also utilized large

numbers of university students, demonstrating the possibility of engaging students in future monitoring activities.

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*Participación Ciudadana - Ecuador
is on the web!*

<http://www.participacionciudadana.org.ec>

GONG INTERNS: A VALUABLE TOOL FOR CROATIAN MPs

Over the past few years, NDI has worked extensively with Croatian partner NGO GONG to increase citizen participation in public affairs. In 2001, GONG, with technical assistance and training from NDI, began developing a legislative internship program. GONG's leadership recognized that Croatia's emerging democracy was suffering because Parliamentarians lacked financial resources. Without the ability to hire legislative aids, many MPs were struggling to prepare for sessions, research legislation, and maintain constituency outreach. GONG's solution: student interns.

GONG intern program coordinator Masa Kovacevic said that the student "candidates who apply for the program wanted to experience work in public institutions and wanted to see how it really works 'inside'." Drawing from a pool of upper-level university student applicants, GONG selects interns based on their knowledge of the Croatian political system and their communication skills. Then interns then take part in a training program to prepare them for work in government. Over the past



You can visit GONG on the web:
<http://www.gong.hr/eng/>

two years, the program has grown from 10 Parliamentary interns to 36 interns serving MPs, the Office of the Prime Minister, the Office for Social Partnership, the Office for Development Strategy, and various local government offices.

Interns are selected through a competitive application process and then trained by NDI and GONG in areas such as office management, communication, and their duties and obligations as GONG interns. Last year, the Parliament added a training seminar for interns to acclimate them to the procedures and services available to them as MPs' assistants. In addition to these trainings, Zagreb-based interns meet weekly to discuss their experiences and meet with members of government, the media, and civil society.

GONG's hope is to maintain the interest of these students in broader issues of participation and citizenship.

GONG interns do more than file and answer telephones. Many have drafted law proposals and researched potential legislation. Intern-drafted leg-

islation has included laws on such important issues as the environment, elections, and trade. In addition, through the urging and initiatives of interns, some MPs have increased and improved constituent outreach efforts. One intern, Violeta Liovic, took it upon herself to draft a Christmas letter on behalf of her MP. The letter was eventually distributed to over 22,000 constituents. Due to the letter, a number of constituents contacted Violeta's employer for assistance in solving problems with government agencies and offices. The MP received great feedback from the public and was very appreciative of Violeta's efforts.

Despite their desire to gain knowledge and experience working within the Parliament, Kovacevic said that "the majority of beginners have quite negative and blurry perceptions of the Parliament and other institutions." This reflects an overall negative view of the Parliament within Croatian society. However, the internship program may be helping to improve this image. According to Kovacevic, "after they start to volunteer [as interns], perception changes. They started to realize that MPs and officials work really hard, that they care." This improved view of the parliament was reflected in a recent newspaper article in a popular

daily journal on the internship program. The interviews with interns painted a positive picture of MPs and the students who work for them.

The internship program has proven itself beneficial to interns as well as MPs. Approximately 1/3 of the former interns have gone on to obtain employment in government offices and ministries at both the national and local level. For example, Lidija Baltin interned in the Zagreb city government's Office for Public Affairs while in the senior year of her journalism program. When she graduated from the university in June of 2002 she received a fulltime position in the same office.

GONG leaders feel the program is very beneficial because it encourages "direct participation of young people in politics and government," says Kovacevic. In addition, many of the students have become involved with other GONG programs and activities. One former intern now works for GONG.

For more information about programs in Croatia, please contact Megan Volk Unangst, munangst@ndi.org

THE ART OF VOTING—MOROCCAN STYLE

Over the past year, NDI has run two ingenuitive programs that promote the participation of Moroccan university students in politics. The first program took place in May 2002 and involved students from the country's best art school, the *Institut Nationale des Beaux Arts* (INBA), in an art competition. The competition, entitled *The Art of Voting*, was developed as part of a larger voter education effort. Due to high levels of sensitivity about foreign involvement in the electoral process, NDI designed the program to incorporate indigenous messages and youth involvement in the political process.

To this end, Amina El Massaoudi, a Mo-



An INBA student works on his *The Art of Voting* submission.

roccan political expert, launched the program with a daylong workshop on the upcoming parliamentary elections and basic issues of electoral literacy. Armed with the knowledge gained through the workshop, 55 students developed paintings, drawings, sculpture, and comic strips on one of five themes: clean voting, encouraging women to vote, the new electoral system (this was the first election under a new party list system), conscious voting, and encouraging the youth vote. Interestingly, three quarters of the students working on the women's partici-



Three of the winning entries from *The Art of Voting* competition.

pation message were male. One of these students, Otman Achmal, said he “decided to work on the women’s theme, because women are disadvantaged especially on the decision-making level.”

Six artists were awarded prizes in a ceremony attended by members of local government and civil society. The ceremony received national coverage on both television and radio. Following the competition, with the assistance of the Ministry of Culture and Communications, the artwork was displayed on a nationwide tour. NDI created three large posters using winning images to advertise *The Art of Voting* tour. These posters were used to educate a larger, more diverse group of citizens. The traveling exhibit received coverage on the national news and was well received throughout the country.

One major impact of the program was an increased awareness of the important role that artists can play in promoting social and national interests. Participant Hasna Aboussalim commented that “I really enjoyed working with the other students, I gained awareness that artists could be a driving force for society.” Hoda Al Moktasser added “I have the feeling that I am doing something good

for my country.” In fact, 90% of the students who participated in the training and competition said they planned to vote in the election. The artwork was also featured on billboards that helped educate Moroccan voters.

More recently, in July of 2003, NDI worked with students from two Moroccan universities on an ethics and anti-corruption program. The goal of this program was to increase the awareness of students on issues of ethical practices and corruption, with the hopes of increasing accountability within government. Through a partnership with Ali N’ Productions, a film production company run by internationally recognized Moroccan filmmaker Nabil Ayoush, NDI held a short film competition for students that focused on the topic of ethics. The three winning films will be entered into Transparency International’s Film for Transparency competition and a top student will be offered an internship with Ali N’ Productions. Program organizers hope to use the films to increase public awareness on issues of corruption and to increase pressure for governmental reform.

For more information on NDI programs in Morocco, contact Tricia Keller, tkeller@ndi.org

BUILDING CONFIDENCE IN DOMESTIC PARTNERS: PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE IN EAST TIMOR

On April 11, 2002, the front page of East Timor's major newspapers featured a photograph of the country's two presidential candidates shaking hands while participating in the East Timor's first complete presidential debate. Organized by the faculty of the National University of East Timor (UNTI), the event was supported by NDI. For those not acquainted with the country's political history, the symbolic importance of this event might have been lost. According to NDI's former East Timor Resident Director Jim Della-Giacoma, the debate in general, and this image in particular, was an important confidence building measure because it "demonstrated to the people of East Timor that political competition can occur without violence and be based on ideas as much as personalities." Previous NDI focus group research had suggested a high level of fear about political activity among the Timorese. This fear was due, in large part, to memories of the country's 1971 civil war that broke out due to competition between political parties and that led to 25 years of Indonesian authoritarian rule.

NDI's sponsorship of the candidate debate developed out of an existing relationship with the faculty of UNTI. Professors discussed with NDI the idea of an American-style presidential debate, believing it would establish the university as a neutral environment for the expression of differing political viewpoints. However, they saw it as an activity for a future election, not for the country's first presidential election.

"They had the idea, but

"Through our existing association, we were able to push them and ask 'Why wait?'"

not the confidence to carry it out. They saw it as an activity for a future election," said Della-Giacoma. "Through our existing association, we were able to push them and ask 'Why wait?' Their initial hesitations were based on easily answered questions like 'Who pays for it?' Within the faculty, there was tremendous knowledge of what makes a good candidate debate—many had witnessed these while studying abroad. The issue was not a lack of knowledge in how to do the debate, but about building momentum so that they could do it," he explains.

This debate offered a unique opportunity for the people of East Timor to learn about the candidate's political viewpoints prior to voting. The organization of the debate forced the candidates to focus on policy issues, whereas up to that point, the campaign had focused on the candidates' role in bringing East Timor its independence. By all accounts, the debate was successful in bringing about a discussion on important domestic and foreign policy issues. Legislators, policy leaders, citizen groups, church representatives, and students were all represented in the audience and given the opportunity to ask questions.



As this was East Timor's first presidential election, a large number of students wished to attend the event. Since there was not enough space in the venue for all to attend, organizers set up a separate room with a live television feed where over 200 students witnessed the debate. As these students were unable to ask questions during the debate, both candi-

dates spent time speaking directly with students on the university steps after the debate.

More importantly, the people of East Timor were able to witness this historic debate and gained insight into the candidates' viewpoints on key issues. The presidential debate was featured on the front page of both of the country's daily newspapers. Radio UNTAET (United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor) broadcast the debates live nationally. Viewers of TVTL (TV Timor Leste) in the major cities of Dili and Baucau were able to watch a recording of the debate within hours of its completion.

By all accounts, the debate was successful on a number of fronts. It served as a confidence-building measure for the voters of East Timor. The debate also brought about a most substantive discussion of policy issues, informing voters prior to the election. Furthermore, NDI's university partners gained confidence and experience in putting on such an important, national event.

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PROFESSIONALIZING THE FIELD OF NGO MANAGEMENT IN INDONESIA

While the NGO sector in Indonesia has experienced tremendous growth over the past few years, NDI and members of the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences at the University of Indonesia recognized a widespread lack of professionalization. In particular, many Indonesian NGOs lack sustainability due to inefficient internal management, weak ties to constituent groups, and a lack of strategic planning.

In order to address these problems, NDI and the Center for Global Civil Society Research (PACIVIS) of the University of Indonesia began a NGO Management Certificate Program in 2001. This program was the first NGO management training program available in Indonesia. Since the program's inception, more than 150 Indonesian ac-



Program participants take part in an exercise promoting teamwork.

tivists and NGO practitioners have participated in the training. Program participants receive certification through the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, adding professional legitimacy to the program.

The NGO Management Certificate Program consists of a 10 day training course targeted at NGO middle managers. The program includes discussions of current affairs

relevant to the sector and concentrates on five major issues:

- Understanding the NGO Paradigm focusing on the role of NGOs in society, codes of conduct, client and constituent relationships, and governance issues
- NGO Management including program planning, human resource management, and financial management



The Civic Update is a quarterly production of NDI's Citizen Participation Team. Please send any comments or suggestions to Citizen Participation Senior Advisor Aaron Azelton (Aaron@ndi.org)

We are always looking for insightful articles to include in the newsletter. Please contact Aaron if you are interested in

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- Organizational Sustainability covers issues of self-reliance, donor relationships, and public fundraising
- Constituent Relations including community organizing, citizen participation, and the making of public policy
- Networking which looks at information technology, the media's role in public opinion, and coalition building.

Program participants Joko Sustanto, a local activist and member of PACIVIS, and Hardi Munte of the Environmental Conservation Foundation both found the program development and strategic planning components most helpful. Participant Irfan Misuari said that he learned networking and management skills that have improved his work at the Institute for Democratic Empowerment and Action.

Although the program is housed at the university in Jakarta, its benefits have extended well beyond the capital. Hardi Munte said "after the training, I transferred what I had learned to my colleagues and friends in North Sumatra."

While previous funding for the NGO Management Certificate Program has run out, NDI staff are currently working with PACIVIS to seek new funding sources. The hope is that PACIVIS will soon be able to run the program independent of NDI financial and technical assistance, further demonstrating the success of this program in promoting professionalism within the field.

Raissa Tatad can be contacted for more information on NDI programs in Indonesia. Her email address is raissa.tatad@ndi.org

Visit PACIVIS on the web: <http://www.pacivis.or.id/>

Civic@ndi.org: A way to communicate with colleagues

Just a reminder that staff members can use the civic group list serve as a means of sharing information, raising questions, and discussing program developments with colleagues around the world. The list serve currently connects nearly 100 people working on, or with an interest in, citizen participation programs. The combined experience of these folks makes the list serve a truly versatile resource.

If you do not currently receive emails from the civic@ndi.org list serve and would like to be included in this list, please contact Aaron Azelton: aaron@ndi.org.