



A newsletter of citizen participation programs worldwide

INDEX

<i>Albania</i>	2
<i>Cambodia</i>	3
<i>Guyana</i>	4
<i>Kosovo</i>	6
<i>Bulgaria</i>	7
<i>Web Sources</i>	9
<i>Civic@ndi.org</i>	9

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

This Civic Update describes how citizen surveys have been used to help organize and activate citizen groups locally. The programs highlighted in this edition provide insights and lessons that can inform future NDI programming.

NEXT ISSUE

The next of Civic Update will feature NDI programs that support government monitoring initiatives of civil society organizations.

Building an Issue Agenda in Local Communities: Citizen Surveys and Other Organizing Tools

What is it like when citizens agree on a set of community concerns and learn to speak with one voice? What happens when citizens actively engage decision makers and drive the political agenda in their communities? Two words might answer these questions: *transformative* and *change*. In most of the places where NDI works, change and transformation occur when citizens organize and become political active. Not only is the process of citizen engagement itself unprecedented in most cases, but oftentimes organized citizen actions can create lasting changes in the way that local politics get done. By organizing, citizens can create and expand political space and help create a more appropriate balance of power with public officials. This is frequently evidenced by more responsive local government, more transparent and inclusive decision making processes and more regular communication between citizens and public officials.

NDI programs around the world are helping citizens politically organize for advocacy, monitoring and participation in decision making processes. When faced with the challenge of how best to help citizens begin demonstrating their collective power, a few NDI programs have used citizen surveys and other tools that help synthesize public opinion and make it possible for citizens to start thinking and acting

strategically in pursuit of shared interests. Such research tools run the gambit from formal random sample surveys to informal questionnaires administered by citizens to friends and neighbors. The tools also include structured interviews and small groups discussions.

Examples of how this type of research is conducted and how it is used by community organizers and activists can be found in this update. Featured are NDI programs in Albania, Bulgaria and Guyana. In the run-up to recent Albanian local elections, Civic Forum program participants organized informal citizen surveys that led to the creation of community issue platforms in 38 municipalities. Likewise, to help create a more issue oriented local election process in Bulgaria, NDI worked with political parties and NGOs to research public opinion and organize candidate debates. The Guyana program offers an example of how survey results prompted the creation of working relationship between a multi-sectoral citizen group and municipal government. Also included in the Update are examples of public opinion polling in Kosovo and structured small group discussions in Cambodia. Finally, there are several on-line resources that can be used to inform the design of citizen participation program activities.

From Monologue to Dialogue: Citizen Surveys in Albania before Local Government Elections

Unlike past Albanian elections where citizens waited for political parties to develop and present campaign platforms, citizens played a pro-active role in the October 2003 local elections. In the lead up to the elections, the Civic Forum program helped citizen groups develop community surveys and draft community platforms detailing their priorities. The community platforms then became the bases for organized interactions with parties, candidates and public officials.

In May, Civic Forum field coordinators began to assist local groups with developing and administering informal community surveys. Community activists worked throughout June to distribute 3290 surveys, 97 percent of which were returned. The field coordinators then helped the groups compile and analyze the survey results, and prepare community platforms in 38 communities across central Albania. Although the methodology was not completely scientific (just community activists and leaders asking a series of questions to their friends and neighbors), the survey results helped paint a picture of citizen interests and issues in each community.

Citizens presented community platforms to the political parties in early September prior to the finalization of candidate lists in an effort to influence candidate selection and party platforms. One follow-on action, related to the candidates lists, had

citizens in the town of Kamez demonstrating for several days outside the Democratic Party office, because the candidate the party selected did not meet the expectations set during the creation of the platforms.



An Albanian woman distributing community surveys

From the outset, the citizen viewed the presentation of the platforms as just the first action in their efforts to create more responsive candidates and public officials. In the run-up to the local elections, citizens in 10 communities organized candidate debates to hear how the candidates' positions on the community platform issues. The debates forced candidates to respond to specific issues for the first time. This successful effort was in

stark contrast to the 2000 local elections when 15 citizen groups tried to organize similar debates, but none of the candidates agreed to participate.

Public officials also made use of the platforms. NDI received a letter from Burhan Caca, the mayor of the Synej commune, thanking the institute for the positive changes the Civic Forum program had brought to the commune, and for the community platform initiative. He said

that the platforms played a decisive role in improving the quality of electoral politics and in his own reelection. In June and July, citizens in Synej's six villages worked as a coalition to administer the community surveys and create community platforms for each village, and for the commune as a whole.

“Other electoral campaigns have been a monologue where the only speakers have been the parties' candidates. This time it will be a dialogue between politicians and citizens.”

Citizen in Kavaje, Albania

“The community platform and its priorities, besides their multiple values, were a concrete help for me in preparing my electoral program, thus, making it more clear, credible and concrete. I am fully convinced that the community platform played a decisive role in my victory in the October 12 elections.”

Mayor of Synej Commune, Albania

In August, using their community platforms as the basis for dialogue, the citizens and the mayor participated in local council meetings on the 2004 local budget process. Through their engagement with local officials, the citizens in Synej succeeded in incorporating the platform’s top priorities (health centers; canals; and public lighting) into the commune’s 2004 local budget.

NDI has been working in Albania since 1991. For more information about NDI’s Programs in Albania please contact Megan Volk Unangst by E-mail at munangst@ndi.org



An Albanian man presenting community platform ahead of the elections that was based on citizen surveys

Preparing for Candidate Debates in Cambodia: Identifying Issues and Engaging Citizens

In the lead up to Cambodia’s July 27, 2003 National Assembly elections, NDI helped local NGOs organize a ground-breaking multi-party candidate debates in 12 of Cambodia’s 24 provinces involving 14 of the 23 contesting political parties. This was the first time that candidates from competing political parties, including the three main political parties came together to debate policy issues in a national legislative election.

After formalizing the relationship with the local NGO partners in each province NDI began training them on the skills they would need to conduct their portion of the debate program. The first task would be organizing an extensive series of citizen discussion groups in each province to determine the leading issues and concerns of the voters. NDI partnered with Pact, an international NGO that works to strengthen the capacity of local NGOs worldwide, to

adapt its DISCUSS program – a series of public discussion forums that provide opportunities for citizens to discuss priority development issues affecting them and their localities – to the needs of the debate program. Following a week long training of the NGO partners in the DISCUSS methodology, in April and May the NGOs collectively organized over 140 discussion groups throughout the 12 provinces, involving more than 2,800 people from a broad spectrum of society.

In tabulating the results, NDI identified and ranked six broad priority sectors per province (such as agriculture, health, security, etc) and identified and ranked more specific concerns within each of these sectors. These results became the basis for NDI and its partners to formulate topics and moderator questions for the debates.

NDI's candidate debates program demonstrated to members of civil society, the government, political parties, the media and the international community that positive and constructive discussion amongst candidates from different parties is possible in Cambodia and that peaceful debate can improve the overall electoral environment by helping to level the playing field for political parties. And, for the first time, the public had an opportunity to compare candidates as they discussed the issues closest to voters' hearts, ultimately helping the people of Cambodia to make a

more informed choice at the polls.

NDI has supported democratic activists and institutions in Cambodia since 1992 through work with civic organizations, political parties and the National Assembly. For more information please contact Kourtney Pompei via E-mail at kpompi@ndi.org

Making Cities Work: Surveys Address Urban Concerns in Guyana

To make local government work better for ordinary people living in Guyana's urban areas, NDI began a program in July 2001 called "Making cities work". The project is designed to increase dialogue between council members and citizens, improve governance by increasing responsiveness by local officials to community concerns, increasing in the quantity and/or variety of public services provided by local councils, and creating the ability to hold public officials accountable to the constituents they represent. Citizen surveys have been the foundation of for these new relationships.

NDI contracted the services of a local New Amsterdam consultant Paulette Henry to design a strategy to gather the baseline data in the town of New Amsterdam. Randomly selected residents of New Amsterdam were interviewed to identify the issues affecting their lives, to assess the degree of responsiveness of the town council to community concerns, to determine the quantity and variety of public services provided by the town council to the citizens and, the frequency of public interaction between council members and citizens.

The survey was administered to 75 citizens of the town and structured interviews were conducted separately with the town councilors by NDI staff. The information gathered provided a baseline for an annual survey to measure service improvements,

council-citizen interaction and degree of citizens' satisfaction with the work of the council. This initial research project became known as the Baseline Data Gathering Project in New Amsterdam. It identified garbage collection, road repairs and drainage works as the three major issues affecting the citizens. The data reinforced the concern of civil society to become involved in the governance of their own community.



The launch of the "Keep Amsterdam Clean" Campaign in New Amsterdam on April 2003

NDI presented the Baseline Data Gathering Project Report to the Mayor and Town Council in the presence of the Deputy Mayor, Town Clerk, staff from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the local media, NGO's, business community, and the regional Health and Regional Education Departments. The groups discussed the report and decided to form a multi-sectoral coordinating committee as a means of trying to begin addressing some of the main community issues.

The citizens based multi-sectoral committee is known as the New Amsterdam Action Group (NAAG) and it was formally constituted in 2002, when an annual general meeting convened to elect a board of directors. Since then, NAAG has created opportunities for the town council to interact with citizens and for citizens to benefit from services provided by the town council.

The survey was a key influence in bringing together for the first time the municipality, business sector and civil society to address issues affecting the town. A local community project for co-operation became the clearing of an interlocking canal that was clogged with overgrown vegetation and other refuse.

NAAG attracted the support of many businesses that donated equipment and finances for the project. It became a collaborative effort between the NAAG, the municipality and the business and became a vivid example of a combined effort to address local problems with local solutions. Based on the community concerns identified by the

In New Amsterdam 90% of people responded that bad roads, inadequate garbage disposal and poor drainage were the key issues affecting their lives.



A citizen of New Amsterdam discussing community issues identified in the citizen surveys, during making of the community group NAAG

surveys NAAG launched 'Keep New Amsterdam Clean' campaign. The activities included live call-in television program to encourage participation of all residents to participate and to discuss ways and means of moving New Amsterdam forward. Local ward committees were formed which included interested citizens to discuss the issues with the staff from Environmental Protection Agency, municipality and the community police. It was advertised on television to encourage residents to become involved with the campaign. Local schools were also

part of this campaign through a Keep New Amsterdam Clean poster competition, essay competition, music and drama competition was held to utilize the creative approach to environmental education.

Citizens were always interested in working in and for the development of their communities and the work of NAAG has given them this opportunity. The creation of NAAG is a big step toward the empowerment of citizens in the city of New Amsterdam and citizen survey, followed by assistance with advocacy training were the key building blocks upon which this community re-energization was based. In March 2003, NDI sponsored a study tour of selected members of

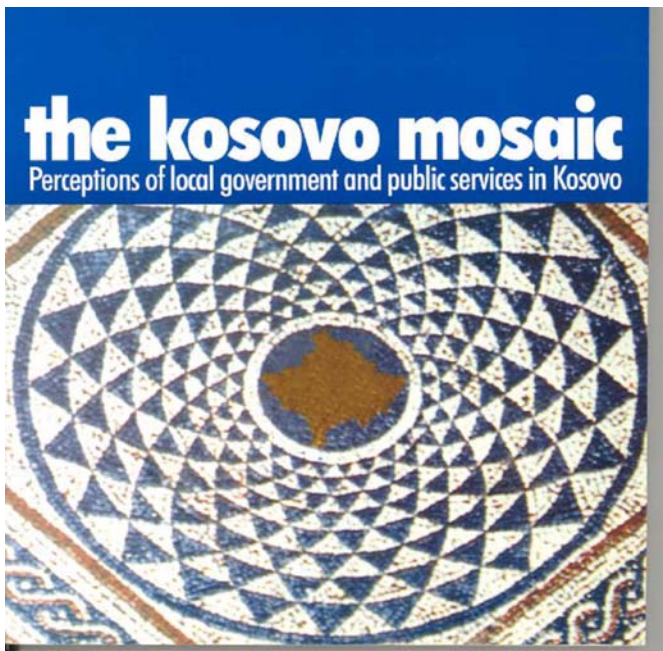
NAAG to participate in a local government conference in South Africa. The Guyana delegation was able to make some outstanding contributions to the conference discussions based on their experience. NAAG brochures were distributed by the organizers

In 2003, the success of the NAAG prompted interest in another department called Anna Regina. A conference was organized in Anna Regina in order for NAAG members to share experiences, problems, and best practices with Anna Regina citizens, business leaders, and NGO's. A second meeting, similar to the first, was facilitated with the NGO sector along with representatives from the Regional Democratic Council and the Town Councils. The participants were very impressed by the way the NAAG was able to harness

the collective energies of the various sectors to work and bridge the ethnic and political divide to work together for the development of New Amsterdam.

NDI has been working in Guyana since 1999. For further information about NDI's programs in Guyana please contact Sandy Quimbaya via E-mail at squimbaya@ndi.org

Making the most of Available Surveys: Launch of Citizen Surveys in Kosovo



There are also many instances where NDI might be able to take advantage of surveys conducted by other organizations. For example the Kosovo mosaic, which was produced by the UNDP in January 2003, helped inform NDI's ongoing local-level citizen participation program by providing information on citizen perceptions of local government and public services. The aim of NDI's Kosovo citizen participation program is to strengthen citizen involvement in public decision making and to increase government responsiveness to citizen concerns

The Kosovo Mosaic presents the key findings and analysis from 6000 person public opinion survey—one of the largest ever undertaken in Kosovo. The survey is a contribution to the ongoing debate about decentraliza-

tion in Kosovo. It attempts to assist in reframing this debate into in driven less by the politics of ethnicity and more by the need to improve the delivery of services to all households in Kosovo and across all 30 municipalities.

Of those surveyed as part of the Kosovo Mosaic project:

- *70% of citizens showed confidence in local authorities*
- *63% said that their municipal problems could be solved locally*
- *60% named electricity as the service most in need of attention*
- *55% believed that electricity would function most effectively if managed locally*
- *50% responded that they saw unemployment as the main problem in Kosovo*
- *25% of the respondents think their municipal problems could only be solved centrally*
- *2% said the problem of unemployment could be addressed at the municipal level*

Closing the Gap between Citizens and Government: Pre-election Surveys in Bulgaria

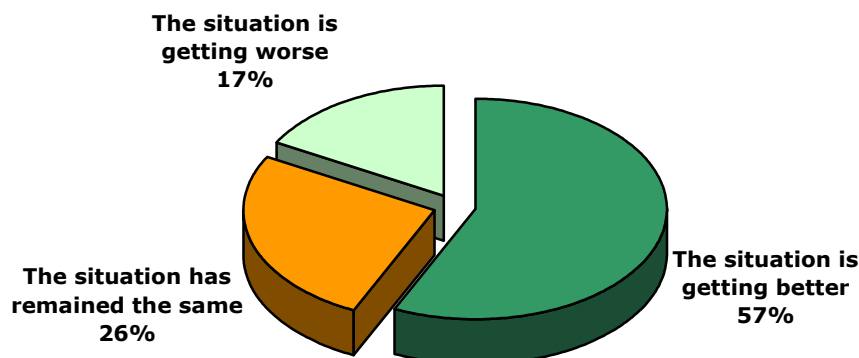
In the last 12 years, Bulgaria has made great progress in developing and strengthening a multiparty political system, governing institutions and civil society. Despite these achievements, Bulgaria still needs to develop a greater degree of substance in the form of active citizen involvement in political processes. Recognizing the disconnect between citizens and public officials, NDI used the October 2003 local election as an opportunity to encourage citizens, politicians and public officials to discuss local issues and policy alternatives. NDI's program, which utilized public opinion research, promoted the notion that local politics need to be driven by local issues.

NDI hired Alpha Research, a private Bulgarian polling firm, to design and conduct the research, and to analyze the results. The research included two stages: a quantitative stage and a qualitative stage. In the quantitative stage, Alpha administered public opinion polls in all 5 municipalities. The sample size was selected in a way that recognized proportional differences between the municipality's demographics. Based on initial discussion with political parties, NDI focused the program in five select municipalities-

Burgas, Vidin, Gobravo, Dobrich and Pazardzhik- and conducted research in each to identify general voter attitudes toward current elected officials, political parties, and local issues such as the environment, infrastructure, and public services. In the quantitative phase, NDI worked with both political parties and local NGOs to determine the polling questions that would be most appropriate and useful for each municipality. For example, in Vidin, a city with a substantial Roma population, the survey questions examined recent problems with the Roma community's electricity payments. In Pazardzhik, questions dealt with the education of minorities and disabled children.

In the qualitative stage of the research, Alpha conducted a series of focus groups to expand on the results of the polling and tried to determine some of the underlying reasons behind public attitudes. The focus groups also examined existing forms of the citizen participation in the communities and attempts made by citizens to resolve local problems. The groups were selected to represent the diversity of each municipality.

How do you think the situation in the city has changed for the last 4 years?

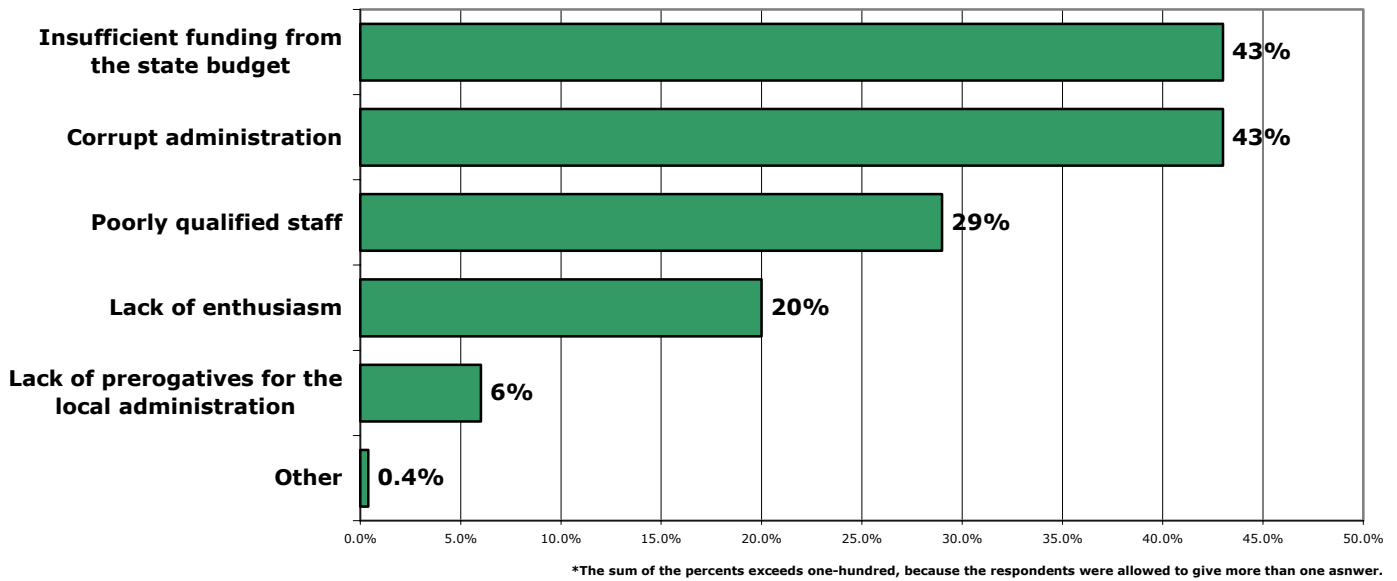


Most Bulgarians who were surveyed by NDI felt their local government was getting better

The research results were similar across the five communities. Citizens expressed the view that NGOs and local government lacked formal mechanism to encourage public participation. Citizens also highlighted concerns about corruption, unemployment, road conditions, and education. Overall, there appeared to be a deep level of dissatisfaction among citizens and a perception the politicians were not working in the interest of citizens. NDI presented the research findings to parties and NGO's and consulted with them on different ways to use the information for public outreach, including organizing and participating in candidate forums.

on the proposed party list. The party conducted 600 surveys and as a result, elevated two individuals to the 2nd and 3rd positions on the list. This was the first time public opinion was taken into account to develop a party list for the local elections. Also, in Vidin, a coalition of NGOs set up a telephone hotline where citizens could obtain information on the local election and election related activities. The NGOs targeted the Roma community with this hotline and as a result, Roma turnout in the elections was higher than in previous years. In addition, this affected the makeup of the municipal council as seven Roma candidates were elected to a council that had no Roma

The municipal authorities haven't made progress due to:



Bulgarians surveyed ahead of the election felt poor funding and corruption were holding back local government

As a result of the surveys, NGO's in Dobrich undertook to plan a series of activities including the meeting of all candidates at the university in Dobrich, as well as to prepare a series of activities in high schools to educate first time voters and encourage them to go to the polls. An online database is also being created so that citizens may access research results on various issues, as well as different NGO's views on the issues.

In the focus groups, citizens expressed an interest developing candidate lists. The political parties were reluctant because they feared it may cause internal fights within the party's local branch. In Vidin however, one party surveyed potential voters

representation in the past.

In all the communities, NGOs organized candidate debates and forums, as well as town hall meetings in which citizens could address candidates about their position on local issues. The results of the NDI polling and focus groups were distributed to all the candidate in advance of the meeting so they could prepare. In addition, NGOs used the research results in order to develop the questions in the meetings and shape the discussion.

NDI has been working in Bulgaria since 1990. For more information please contact Annisa Wanat via E-mail at awanat@ndi.org



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 for any future submissions.

Editors

Aaron Azelton
Jim Della-Giacoma
Richa Singh

Writers

Richa Singh
Aaron Azelton

Layout and Design

Richa Singh

The Citizen Participation Team would like to thank the program officers and field representatives who provided assistance in compiling this edition of the Civic Update.

Request from Bulgaria

A recent request from NDI's Bulgaria office prompted the Citizen Participation team to find information about legal frameworks for citizen participation in government decision-making. One source that the team found is the website listed below. The site is organized around several reports comparing Legal Frameworks on a regional basis. Please add the to your list of citizen participation references.

<http://www.ids.ac.uk/logolink/resources/legalframewks.htm>

Useful Web Sources

The Citizen Participation team has also found some recent academic literature examining some of the opportunities and challenges associated with initiating and sustaining active citizen involvement in public decision making. Some of the literature features descriptions of different forms of participation, such as citizen juries, advisory committees and town hall meetings. The papers also discuss why it is difficult to institutionalize substantive and systematic citizen participation. To review these sources, see the links below:

<http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/aspa/unpan005971.pdf>

<http://www.by-og-byg.dk/aura/workshops/papers/workshop1/font.pdf>

http://www.apprn.org/pdf/Curtain_CitizenEngagementPart1.pdf

<http://www.ids.ac.uk/logolink/resources/legalframewks.htm>

Civic@ndi.org: A Way to Reach Out to 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 around 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 and powerful 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 by E-mail at aaron@ndi.org.
