



CIVIC UPDATE

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A PUBLICATION OF THE CITIZEN PARTICIPATION TEAM OF NDI

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CIVIC SNAPSHOT



COMMON GROUND: MPs and citizens in Malawi work together to improve their children's education.

NEXT ISSUE

MIXING YOUTH AND POLITICS: NDI works with politically active young people around the world. In the next issue of *Civic Update* will spotlight these programs with youth.

MONITORING AS A DRIVER OF CHANGE

Monitoring political players and processes can be a useful organizing tool when civic groups are seeking to bring about change.

During the last 20 years, NDI has consistently enlarged the scope of its political participation work with citizens, both in terms of the number of programs and the type of initiatives. This has led to developments like Civic Forum, citizen advisory committees, media monitoring, community platforms and candidate debates. In recent times, a new type of program has begun to emerge that is best characterized as *political process monitoring*. This work is still very new and the tools and techniques associated with it are still being developed and refined by NDI. Nonetheless, in places where this work is being carried out, the developments seem promising enough to merit an examination of how political process monitoring programs function and what they are able to accomplish.

For the most part, NDI's political process monitoring programs



are designed to help CSOs develop the means to gather, analyze and use information about the work of government. The information and analysis resulting from monitoring activities is essentially a form of power that groups can use to advance their particular issues and interests. For these local organizations, monitoring is a tool used to help bring about desired changes, in terms of public priorities, policies, and process.

More needs to be learned about political process monitoring, but the programs highlighted in this Update suggest it can help create space for more citizen involvement and can help transform how government works.

MONITORING AS A MEANS TO SEVERAL ENDS

Ukraine: CVU uses techniques honed during the monitoring of elections to prompt responsible government between polls.

Malawi: Civic networks based around sectors such as health and education monitor government policies and expenditures to help fight poverty.

Turkey: A nationwide effort is emerging to monitor parliamentary processes and promote greater transparency and responsiveness.

Kosovo: Political process monitoring is a key element for civic groups advocating to local government.

APPLYING LESSONS LEARNED IN THE HEAT OF THE ELECTION “BATTLE” TO MONITORING IN “PEACETIME”

It is not uncommon for civic activists around the world to use military metaphors in describing their work. They struggle and fight, engage in battles and use tactics. They marshal their troops and plot progress on maps. In the Ukraine, the Committee of Voters of Ukraine (CVU) set up to monitor elections draw the distinction between war and peace — with wartime being the intense and brief periods of elections and peacetime being the time when with eternal vigilance they watch over those elected to ensure their democratic gains are not lost.



MAPPED OUT: CVU Deputy Director in CVU office reports from the front lines of democratic monitoring

In 2002, after a successful election monitoring exercise, CVU started a new program of “democracy monitoring”. The Kiev-based group began systematically reporting on the legislative and executive branch of government in Ukraine in a program modeled on its election monitoring. Prior to Ukraine’s 2002 parliamentary elections CVU activists throughout the country conducted interviews with key players in the electoral process and documented the public statements and behavior of government representatives, the election commission, parties and candidates in the pre-election period. Local activists forwarded reports to the central office in Kiev. CVU leaders compiled it into monthly or bi-monthly reports on election commission formation, freedom to campaign, government interference in elections, voter lists and other aspects of the electoral process. These were made public at local and international media at press conferences.

In the Ukraine, CVU’s network of activists have used election-period techniques for what the organization calls “peacetime” monitoring.

CVU’s network of activists throughout the country now use the same election-period techniques for gathering, verifying and summarizing information in what the organization calls “peacetime” or the

periods between elections. CVU has issued reports on local governments’ compliance with presidential decrees intended to increase transparency in government and those mandating balanced public education on proposed changes to Ukraine’s constitution. CVU local activists evaluated the public education meetings according to set criteria to determine whether they were accessible to the public, all viewpoints were heard and if there was any pressure on government employees to organize or attend the events.

Furthermore, CVU has reported several times on the performance of the national parliament, including the attendance record of deputies and the number of times they visit their districts. While not a legal sanction, these reports had a strong moral impact. The deputy with the worst attendance record in a recent CVU report quickly called a meeting with his constituents and promised to change his ways.



PRESSING FOR CHANGE: CVU has used media events to maximize the impact of its monitoring

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With a presidential election scheduled in the Ukraine in October 2004, CVU has now turned its attention to analyzing the backgrounds, political affiliation and appointment of Ukrainian civil servants. It hopes to lay a foundation for reporting more thoroughly on the misuse of so-called “administrative resources”, that is the control of the state bureaucracy and budget, for electoral purposes.

All CVU reports are released at national press conferences and discussed in regional roundtables in which CVU focuses on the deputy or official from that area. The reports are also posted on CVU’s web site and published in its newsletter “New Power” and are widely quoted.

Ukrainian Public Radio airs discussions on CVU’s monitoring of deputies, constitutional reform and other subjects three to four times a month. To magnify media coverage CVU has tried to tie its reports to the political calendar, for example, focusing on the national parliament twice a year, half way through the session and when the session ends. Many of CVU’s 25 oblast (province) branches also conduct

local monitoring. They attend council sessions and publicize deputies’ failure to show up at their own scheduled office hours. Some also monitor the performance of executive branch agencies about which CVU has received many complaints.

CVU is the Ukraine’s largest nonpartisan NGO engaged in election-monitoring. It was formed in 1994 when NDI helped a group of young people who were interested in monitoring Ukraine’s first parliamentary and presidential elections build an organization modeled on similar efforts in Eastern Europe. That group has grown into a nationwide organization with permanent national and regional leadership, an activist democratic board of directors and chapters throughout Ukraine. CVU monitored national elections in 1994, 1998, 1999, and 2002 and conducted numerous public relations and government accountability programs between elections.

*NDI has been working in Ukraine since 1992.
For further information please contact
Regional Director Nelson Ledsky
nelson@ndi.org*

MONITORING BUDGET ISSUES TO HELP COMBAT THE ROOT CAUSES OF POVERTY IN MALAWI



in 2001, to support monitoring and tracking of the national budget, as well as the actual delivery of programs and services. Both the parliament and civil society are now involved in analyzing government spending in light of the priorities stipulated in the PRSP. Despite a few setbacks and the need to have relied on trial-and-error in some instances, the program is making important progress and also generating valuable lessons learned along the way.

As part of its efforts over the last few years, NDI facilitated the formation of five networks of civic groups organized around the issues of agriculture, education, health, economic justice and gender respectively. Each network consists primarily of service delivery NGOs; most of which have been working in Malawi for years.

FIRST HAND KNOWLEDGE: The Education Committee of Malawi Parliament on a study tour of a school for the blind, co-organized by a civil society network, saw for themselves the need for priority to be given to special education.

By explicitly committing itself to a poverty reduction process, the government of Malawi opened the door for issue-based activism on the part of many civic society organizations.

Like many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, Malawi suffers from poverty and all the ailments associated with it. As one of Africa's poorest countries, Malawi qualified under the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) program for debt relief by developing a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) for the World Bank, which details the country's planned public expenditures in key sectors of the economy.

To help ensure that the legislature and civil society play a role in overseeing the implementation of the PRSP, NDI designed its current program, initiated

NDI believed that by focusing on poverty-alleviation goals, common to both Parliament and civil society, substantive interactions would be fostered that would create precedents for effective citizen participation and parliamentary transparency and responsiveness.

Working in conjunction with the Budget and Finance Committee, the networks identified nine Priority Poverty Expenditures (PPEs) by which to measure government progress in addressing poverty-related issues. Following the adoption of these PPEs

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by the Committee, the networks began monitoring government spending and initiatives related to those PPEs, reporting their findings back to the Budget and Finance and the sectoral committees (i.e., Health, Education, Agriculture).

Monitoring the budget from the treasury to the grassroots level turned out to be extremely challenging, particularly for nine separate PPEs and five different networks. The networks faced specific methodological and practical difficulties, such as designing and testing simple survey instruments, selecting credible and feasible locations for sampling, and collecting information from data points throughout the country.

In an effort to address these challenges, NDI funded a number of Malawian economists to assist the Budget and Finance committee and the networks in designing appropriate survey tools. NDI also worked with the networks to overcome a lack of financial resources, by helping plan a geographically representative survey that could be conducted voluntarily by personnel already in the field for each network.

During 2002 and early 2003, dozens of civic monitors obtained information from: health workers at six district hospitals, 36 local clinics and ten health training institutions; educational officials at six district education offices, 51 primary schools and almost all teacher training institutions; and Agricultural extension services supervisors and 53 extension field assistants in all three regions of Malawi. Monitors also collected data on how spending and outputs compared to the previous year.

NDI consulted with the Budget and Finance Committee and the civic networks over the course of their investigation and monitoring efforts, serving as a sounding board and mentor. NDI helped the groups in a number of key respects, including providing advice on how better to focus their questions, offering ideas for alternative sources

of information when they ran into roadblocks, playing the role of devil's advocate during their analyses and critiquing their documentation of findings for clarity and credibility.

In May 2003, civic networks presented preliminary findings to the Budget and Finance Committee. Networks data included evidence of the inequitable distribution of teaching and learning materials, poor record-keeping and widespread outages of vital drugs, and extension workers unable to reach farmers because they had no transport.

On a more positive note, they also documented substantial increases in the number of teachers and health workers in training, as well as increased salaries for both. The reports were presented with recommendations to the committees.

To follow up on the budget monitoring activities and in preparation of the parliamentary elections in 2004, NDI has been training the civic networks to organize and implement issue-based advocacy campaigns. These organizations are working with parliament on making policy changes based on the issues identified in the monitoring reports.

Building capacity of networks and parliament to become advocates of change is a challenge. The networks themselves have a limited capacity for advocacy and parliament is not yet seen as an important player in the policy process. However, networks and parliament are beginning to understand that they need to work together to influence government policy.

*NDI has been working in Malawi since 1993.
For any further information please contact
Program Assistant Brionne Dawson
bdawson@ndi.org*

TURKISH GRASSROOTS MOVEMENT ASPIRES TO OPEN UP POLITICS THROUGH PARLIAMENTARY MONITORING

President Franklin D. Roosevelt once said, “people acting together can accomplish things which no individual acting alone could ever hope to bring about.”

This sentiment seems to be shared by an emerging government monitoring group in Turkey. The Parliamentary Monitoring Committee, or Tumikom, has begun to systematically monitor and report on the performance of the Members of Parliament (MPs) comprising Turkey’s national legislature. Guided by a self-prescribed ethical code of conduct and written standards for reporting, Tumikom is the first national organization dedicated to nonpartisan monitoring and reporting on MP activities.

Since its inception nearly seven years ago, Tumikom has steadily enlarged into a nationwide grassroots initiative with the ultimate goals of improving parliamentary transparency and responsiveness. Presently, 32 committees, known as Mikoms, are organized across the country; dedicated to monitoring and reporting on the activities of their local parliamentarian.

The head of Tumikom, Mustafa Durna, said that their authority comes from the public conscience, laws and Article 21 of the Constitution. He adds that the aim of the reports is to keep the public memory vivid and to create a voters’ consciousness.

“We trace our votes. We exert efforts to

change the political system from political parties law to the authoritarian party leaders,” Durna said in a magazine interview.

Recently, NDI assisted Mikoms throughout Turkey to elect a five-member national secretariat to lead the organization. The secretariat meets once every month to discuss ways to improve communication among the branches, to employ national reporting standards and to manage the activities of the Tumikom monitoring organization.

NDI holds regular consultations with the head of the Tumikom and training sessions for Mikom leaders. A key aspect of NDI’s assistance has been facilitating the creation of a step-by-step training manual for use by the Mikoms.

At this time, Tumikom is the process of creating a national report, which integrates

regional reports on MPs from 32 different constituencies. Initial work on the report slowed as the parliament failed to publicly release requisite information, such as MP attendance records. Consequently, Tumikom issued a number of press releases and gave interviews to the media while simultaneously working with the parliament to obtain the needed information, which parliament eventually made available in late December 2003.

Once completed, the report will measure the performance of the MPs against criteria, such as “speaking off the agenda” and the “number of draft laws” submitted by each legislator. The work of the MPs who are cited in the official minutes of the parliament will be evaluated in the report. Tumikom



PEOPLE’S REPRESRENATIVES: The first Turkish parliament or “Grand Assembly” met in 1877.

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also prepares local reports recording the fulfillment of promises made by the MPs for their own constituencies. This on going work at the local level continues to be the foundation on which Tumikom is based.

Another major Tumikom undertaking has been the development of a basic questionnaire that asks political party candidates to commit themselves to parliamentary ethics reform. The results have been compiled and issued as a press release. Even former Prime Minister Abdullah Gul completed the Tumikom

questionnaire and committed himself to the abolition of deputy immunity, a key demand of the monitoring group. Tumikom also prepares “interim” reports. For example it has announced a report on which MPs voted yes and no for the Amnesty Law. Tumikom wants to prepare more interim reports but there are still too many closed parliamentary sessions.

NDI has been working in Turkey since 2000.

For further information please contact

Regional Director Nelson Ledsky

nelson@ndi.org

COMMUNITY OF ADVOCATES MONITORS GOVERNMENT



UNDER PRESSURE: Media conferences proved an important tool in amplifying the voice of CSOs engaged in monitoring like these in Mitrovica .

Kosovar citizens have something to say about the work of their municipal government, and they are not shy about voicing their opinion.

In several municipalities throughout Kosovo, citizen groups are monitoring local government and reporting what they see and what they think about the proceedings. For these groups, monitoring is not an end in itself, rather it is an essential advocacy tool.

For the last three years, NDI has operated in select municipalities to guide citizen groups purposefully toward organizing and advocacy. The overall goal of the program is to create an appropriate

balance of power between citizens, their public officials and institutions. Part of this effort involves helping citizens develop the tools needed to scrutinize government and influence decisions. As a result of NDI's work to date, there has been a marked increase in organized citizen participation and, consequently, an improvement in municipal assembly performance.

Kosovo is a challenging post-conflict environment, where citizens from different ethnic backgrounds must begin coming together to address the broader political and social challenges facing the region. In 2003, NDI partnered with a diverse set of civil groups in 12 municipalities.

NDI worked with many groups that had been involved previously in NDI's Civic Forum program, as well as new civic group partners identified through discussions with other international organizations, local civic and political leaders and other informed contacts. After clarifying organizational goals and advocacy objectives, each civic group was asked to identify a specific person to be responsible for monitoring. NDI then trained these activists on government monitoring tactics, such as setting goals and timelines; tracking relevant information; and reporting format.

The different civic groups monitor local government for a couple different reasons. For

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example, the Council for Defense of Human Rights and Freedoms (CDHRF) is working to institutionalize UN Regulation 2000/45, which governs the functioning of the municipal assemblies. CDHRF is specifically concerned with provisions that promote accountability and transparency, because they want to ensure that, in practice, adequate space for citizen oversight and involvement is institutionalized. Among other activities, CDHRF activists observe assembly plenary sessions and committees, organize public debates and press conferences, and meet elected officials and political party leaders regularly.

Other groups, such as the disability rights group Handikos, monitor local government as a way to advance the issue of access to public facilities for the disabled. At the same time, such issue-based efforts are also helping to open local government and make it a truly public institution.

After monitoring the government for a period

of time, usually three months, the different civic groups analyze the information collected and compile reports. These reports are distributed to the public, municipal assemblies, political parties, the OSCE, USAID and other interested parties. The reports contain specific recommendations that the civic groups want to see the assemblies adopt, while also acknowledging positive developments within the assemblies.

“The Municipal Assembly should find solution to ensure participation of the Serbian community within the Committees for Communities and Mediation. These are crucial committees for exercising Human Rights and integration of the minorities”.

Civic Group Press Statement on Oblic Assembly.

Based upon the information they collect through political process monitoring, civic groups are advocating for change. As a result

of the monitoring and advocacy campaigns, one municipal council finally started meeting regularly and most of the 12 municipal councils are now announcing the plenary agenda one week in advance. In addition, several assemblies have formed committees to focus on youth in the community and one civic group drafted environmental legislation that was introduced in the plenary session.

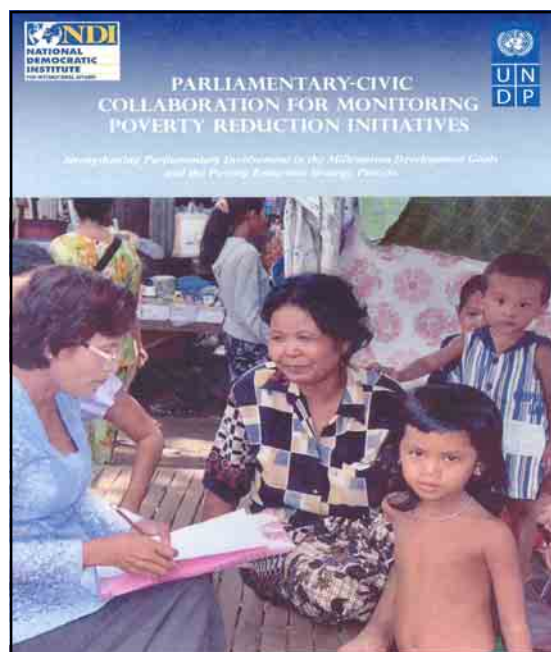
NDI has been working in Kosovo since 1999. For any further information please contact Program Officer Annisa Wanat awanat@ndi.org

Forthcoming Publication

NDI’s Democratic Governance functional team, in partnership with UNDP, is completing a handbook entitled, “Parliamentary-Civic Collaboration for Monitoring Poverty Reduction Initiatives”.

Designed to strengthen legislative and civic oversight of poverty reduction activities, the document emerged from some pilot activities undertaken by NDI designed to strengthen the capacity of legislatures and civil society to participate in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Process (PRSP).

The handbook will be launched very soon. Please add it to your list of monitoring references.





ABOUT US

The Civic Update is a quarterly production of the Citizen Participation Team of NDI. Please send any comments or suggestions to Senior Advisors

Aaron Azelton
Aaron@ndi.org

Jim Della-Giacoma
jdella-giacoma@ndi.org

Contributions welcome!

PRODUCTION

Editors

Jim Della-Giacoma
 Aaron Azelton
 Richa Singh

Writers

Richa Singh
 Aaron Azelton

Layout and Design

Richa Singh

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HELPING CIVIL SOCIETY UNDERSTAND GOVERNMENT BUDGETING

The International Budget Project assists civil society organizations around the world to improve budget policies and decision-making processes.

It is the project started by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. The IBP assists non-government organizations and researchers in their efforts both to analyze budget policies and to improve budget processes, systems, and intuitions. The project is especially interested in promoting and assisting with applied research on the effects of budget policies on the poor.

The IBP works mostly with organizations that conduct analysis in developing countries or in countries new to democracy. The overarching goal of the project is to make budget systems more responsive to the needs of society and, accordingly, to make these systems more transparent and accountable to the public. The IBP helps organize conferences and workshops; maintains a resource base of NGO budget work; conducts research on budget issues; facilitates the exchange of information among budget researchers and groups; provides technical assistance and training; and strives to raise the profile of budget work. They have done budget monitoring in many countries and have published reports which can be viewed at their website Please add this to you reference list.

Their website is: **www.internationalbudget.org**

Some other useful international websites for general budget resources:

Africa:	Europe:
http://www.idasa.org.za/	http://bicc.de/
http://www.sarpn.org.za/	http://cci.glasnet.ru/index.htm
http://www.afdb.org/	http://www.urbanecomomics.ru/eng/index.php
	http://teia.pu.ru/

STAY IN THE LOOP WITH **Civic@ndi.org**

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 resources.

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**.