



NDI Reports

Spring 2004

WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Win with Women — A Global Initiative is Launched

Around the world, talented women are ready to use their professional expertise in public life; yet in virtually every country their efforts are hampered by economic, cultural and institutional barriers. As a result, women are dramatically underrepresented in positions of political leadership.

Political parties — the gateways to political office — are key to advancing women's full participation in the political process. It is not enough for parties to establish women's wings or place women at the lower end of party lists; they must develop real avenues for women's leadership roles.

Last December, under the leadership of Chairman Madeleine Albright, NDI convened "Win with Women: Strengthen Political Parties," a global women's forum in Washington D.C. Women political party leaders from 27 countries met to develop a Global Action Plan to promote political party reforms that advance women's leadership.

Participants in the Forum included political leaders such as then-Prime Minister of Peru, Beatriz Merino Lucero; the president of Liberal International, Annemie Neyts-Uytbroeck; convener of the NGO Forum at the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women, Supatra Masdit from Thailand; member of the Ugandan National Assembly, Winnie Byanyima; and former U.S. vice-presidential candidate, Geraldine Ferraro, as well as members of parliament and political party leaders from around the world.



Forum participant Soumaia Benkhaldoun, a member of the Moroccan House of Representatives

During the Forum, participants examined political party structures that have enabled active leadership roles for women, candidate recruitment and training programs, successful outreach efforts, fundraising and communication opportunities, and avenues for influencing government policies.

At the conclusion of the Forum, participants adopted the Global Action Plan (see box on



Then-Peruvian Prime Minister Beatriz Merino Lucero with former U.S. vice-presidential candidate and NDI Board member Geraldine Ferraro and former Secretary of State and NDI Chairman Madeleine Albright at the Forum closing luncheon.

"Although we came to the Global Forum from 27 different countries, each with their own unique cultural, religious and ethnic compositions, we realized that women around the world face very similar obstacles in the political arena."

— Then-Prime Minister Beatriz Merino Lucero of Peru

page 2), which identifies mechanisms within political parties that can promote women's advancement. This document is unique in that its authors are political party practitioners who have direct experience in overcoming the barriers to women's political participation. With its focus on political parties, the Plan offers practical recommendations that parties can adopt to promote women's leadership roles, thereby becoming more representative, credible and democratic organizations. The Global Action Plan will be publicized and distributed around the world. Political and civic leaders are being encouraged to become signatories to the Plan and use it to advocate for change in their respective countries.

The Plan has already been introduced and discussed in a variety of forums, including: the World Movement for Democracy's Assembly in Durban, South Africa in February; a recent campaign training school for women candidates in Qatar; and a special panel at the UN Commission on the Status of Women in New York. Participants at the Congress of Democrats from the Islamic World, which convened in

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WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

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Istanbul in April, reviewed the Plan as a part of their focus on women's political participation.



At the December 9 luncheon, Representative Jane Harman (D-CA) spoke about her experiences as one of 76 women members in the U.S. Congress.

In Turkey, a fledgling network of activists — which includes Güldal Akçit, the Minister of Women's Affairs, as well as elected officials, journalists and prominent businesswomen

— met to discuss the Plan and is formulating a strategy to take action on measures highlighted in the document.



Forum participant Tioulong Saumura, Member of the Cambodian Parliament.

Arising from the Forum, NDI and a local women's organization will host a conference, "Gaining Leverage in the Political Process," in Kosovo. Political party office-holders, elected offi-

cial, and NGO leaders will attend, and will use the Global Action Plan as a basis to develop a Kosovo Action Plan. That plan will address the need for skills and support for women in the Central and Municipal Assemblies. A Win with Women website will provide political party activists who sign on to the Plan the opportunity to exchange ideas, strategies and best practices, and over time, become a repository for training and resource materials to support efforts to increase women's roles in political life.

The Win with Women initiative augments NDI's ongoing work to help women acquire the tools to engage effectively in political processes. More than 50 NDI programs in over 30 countries help create an environment in which women can advocate on matters of policy, campaign effectively for political office, be elected, govern skillfully, and participate meaningfully in every facet of civic and political life. To read or become a signatory to the Global Action Plan, please visit the Win with Women website at www.winwithwomen.ndi.org.



Forum participants (L-R) Aicha Belhadjar, Algerian Movement for a Peaceful Society; Temi Harriman, Member of the Nigerian House of Representatives; and Winnie Byanima, Member of the Ugandan National Assembly.



During a plenary session at the Global Women's Forum, political leaders discuss breaking down barriers to women's participation in political parties.

EXCERPTS FROM THE GLOBAL ACTION PLAN

GOAL

1. Remove restrictions on women's political participation, including restrictions on women's suffrage and candidacy.
2. Increase the number of women elected officials at the national, provincial and local levels.
3. Ensure that political parties include women in meaningful leadership positions and in meaningful numbers.
4. Encourage greater participation of women in government decision-making and advocating for legislation that enshrines the full equality of women and men.

RECOMMENDATIONS INCLUDE

- Ensure women's right to vote and stand for election and take measures to prevent political violence that limits women's participation.*
- Improve candidate recruitment and training, design special measures to achieve equity and provide financial support for candidates.*
- Democratize internal party decision-making and leadership structures, create party platforms and by-laws that reflect this commitment, and conduct targeted outreach to women voters.*
- Increase the number of women in political leadership positions and holding key portfolios, and form women's caucuses in legislative bodies.*

Guatemala Elections: Building Citizen Participation and Confidence

The November and December general elections marked a critical moment in building citizen trust in Guatemala's fragile democracy. For the first time since democratic rule was restored in 1986, Guatemalans had begun to express a lack of confidence in the electoral process, and concerns over bias in the courts. A Constitutional Court ruling permitting retired General Efraín Ríos Montt to run as a presidential candidate increased political tensions, and raised questions as to whether the 1985 constitutional provision that prohibits coup participants from seeking public office applied to him. Furthermore, a resurgence of political violence and intimidation threatened to undermine the legitimacy of the electoral process, and deter voters from participating in the elections.

Against this backdrop, NDI worked with a coalition of four Guatemalan advocacy, human rights, political party training organizations and think-tanks to organize the country's first nationwide election monitoring effort — *Mirador Electoral 2003: Somos tus Ojos Guatemala* (Election Observer 2003: We are your Eyes Guatemala). With financial support from the governments of Canada, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States, a national network of more than 3,000 observers was formed, creating a constructive avenue for citizen participation in the electoral process. Under the umbrella of *Mirador Electoral*, its member organizations produced a series of independent reports that helped safeguard the quality and integrity of the elections.

Given the initial concerns of widespread violence and intimidation, a key element of *Mirador Electoral's* pre-election work included tracking and verifying information on political coercion, intimidation and violence throughout the country. NDI helped the *Mirador* member groups design observer forms and a database to analyze and present qualitative data. According to Frank La



Mirador domestic election monitors receive briefing before heading out to the polls in Guatemala's parliamentary elections.



Mirador observers were trained to monitor the conduct of election authorities, political parties and the media, track incidents of intimidation and coercion, and systematically evaluate the voting and counting processes on election day.

Rue, head of the Center for Legal Action on Human Rights (CALDH), "this network of young observers denouncing human rights violators in their hometowns served as a mechanism to begin to break silence and impunity."

One *Mirador* member group, the Central American Institute for Political Studies (INCEP), drew on information collected by the observers to publish periodic reports on human rights violations and administrative shortcomings, and to present recommendations to political leaders and the electoral authorities. Reports gathered

by another *Mirador* member, *Acción Ciudadana*, showed that electoral authorities had not made adequate preparations to handle the large number of voters who turned out, leading to administrative delays, cramped voting sites and long voter lines on election day.

An investigative report by the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO) determined that the voter registry contained incorrect data that might have caused it to be inflated by as much as 30 percent. This could explain why historically voter turnout in Guatemala has appeared to be low.

On January 21, *Mirador Electoral* and NDI released a compilation of the independent observation reports produced by the member organizations, as well as final recommendations to the national election commission. As a result of these efforts, the commission in turn solicited assistance with future electoral reform initiatives.

To learn more about *Mirador's* activities or to read the observation reports, please visit www.miradorelectoral2003.org.

Contrasting Elections in Georgia, Russia and Azerbaijan

Recent national elections conducted in Georgia, Azerbaijan and Russia have profoundly affected the democratic path of these countries and will likely influence the conduct of future polls held in neighboring states of the former Soviet Union.

GEORGIA

In Georgia, when authorities held seriously flawed legislative elections — designed to achieve a specific outcome — civil society organized to expose the misconduct. And when then-President Eduard Shevardnadze attempted to seat the illegitimately elected parliament, it was democratic party leaders, backed by the people of Georgia, who courageously and peacefully demanded and regained their political rights.

The campaign period leading up to the November 2 parliamentary polls was relatively open, with an independent media providing avenues for opposition candidates to communicate with voters. Many of the young democratic leaders of opposition parties were once protégés of President Shevardnadze, who faced mounting public discontent with his 11-year rule.

The elections themselves, however, were marred with what one international observer group called “spectacular irregularities.” NDI’s partner civic group in Georgia, the International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED), released a parallel vote tabulation 24 hours after the polls that projected the opposition National Movement with a plurality of the vote. The Central Election Commission subsequently announced that the ruling For a New Georgia bloc had won. This discrepancy, when combined with further evidence of a failed process, quickly contributed to public demands for new elections.

When President Shevardnadze attempted to seat the newly elected parliament, democratic party activists, led by opposition leaders Mikheil Saakashvili of the National Movement party, and Nino Burjanadze and Zurab Zhvania of the



Thousands gather in Tbilisi to protest the fraudulent results of the November 2 Georgian parliamentary elections. This movement led to the resignation of President Shevardnadze.

Burjanadze-Democrats bloc, rallied large-scale demonstrations in Tbilisi and across the country. While international news reports warned of a country sliding toward chaos and the brink of civil war, Georgia undertook what was later dubbed “the rose revolution,” as Saakashvili led protesters, bearing roses, into the chambers of parliament.

In the following days, Shevardnadze resigned and the November elections were annulled. A new poll in January brought the election of Saakashvili as president and a peaceful transfer of power.

The re-polling for parliament was held on March 28. A coalition led by



Eighty-seven percent of the Georgian population voted in the January 4 presidential election, which former opposition leader Mikheil Saakashvili won overwhelmingly.

Saakashvili, Zhvania and Burjanadze gained 67 percent of the vote with only one other bloc, The Rightist Opposition, able to surpass the 7 percent threshold for representation in the parliament. This time, ISFED’s vote count coincided with the official tallied results.

In addition to supporting the election monitoring efforts of ISFED, NDI helped Georgian political parties prepare for the elections and foster coalitions among like-minded groups.

Two months before the November elections, the Institute sponsored a high-level delegation to Georgia in an attempt to encourage efforts, particularly by President Shevardnadze and the government, to promote a credible electoral process. The delegation was led by former Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott; former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General (ret.) John Shalikashvili; and former Congressman Sam Gejdenson, a member of the NDI Board of Directors. Recommendations offered by the group focused on many of the same areas that ultimately led to the electoral crisis, including improved transparency in the balloting process, neutrality of state authorities, and resources for the elections.

AZERBAIJAN

Calling the October 15 presidential election “a failed opportunity for moving Azerbaijan toward democratic governance,” NDI concurred with the central findings issued by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) that the poll “fell short of international standards...”

After the government of Azerbaijan refused to invite or accredit an NDI international delegation to observe the election, a small group of NDI representatives participated in a larger-scale OSCE election observation mission. The NDI team was co-led by Sam Gejdenson and Alexander Longolius, former President *Pro Tem* of the Berlin House of Representatives.

This election marked the managed transfer of power from ailing President Heydar Aliyev, who had led Azerbaijan since 1993, to his son, Ilham. It also represented a continuation of seriously flawed processes that had marred presidential and parliamentary polls since 1995.

International election observers documented a pre-election pattern of official intimidation and excessive force. This included arrests of journalists and opposition leaders and the domination of the news media by pro-Aliyev coverage,



NDI and partner organization Election Monitoring Center lead a training for election monitors in Azerbaijan.

which allowed no basis for political competition. Election day itself was marked by violent incidents, widespread voter disenfranchisement, ballot box stuffing, and serious irregularities in the counting and tabulation processes.

Unlike Georgia, where electoral misconduct sparked a popular uprising, the government in Azerbaijan restricted opposition activities before the polls, and swiftly carried out a post-election crackdown that quelled internal dissent. Hundreds of journalists and political and civic activists were arrested and subsequently sentenced to prison terms of up to five years.

Since 1995, NDI has maintained ongoing programs to strengthen a broad

spectrum of political parties and to promote the growth of civic organizations in Azerbaijan. NDI-sponsored programs in the pre-election period, however, were hindered by an atmosphere of fear among civic groups and parties. NDI’s main civic partner, For the Sake of Civil Society (FSCS), in contrast to past practices, failed to make a clear statement on its election observations. In addition, domestic observers, including those trained by FSCS and another NDI partner, the Election Monitoring Center, faced serious obstacles to collecting information, and those monitors who managed to enter polling places were often forced to leave when the vote counting began.

RUSSIA

A popular president and the ruling party predictably won overwhelming support in Russia’s parliamentary and presidential elections on December 7 and March 14 respectively. President Vladimir Putin polled 71 percent of the vote with the Unified Russia party amassing a majority in the lower-house State Duma.

While Putin’s victory was never in doubt, government control of the national media and selective use of state resources gave the president and pro-government parties dramatic advantages. Media bias in particular precluded coverage of opposition

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PRESIDENT SAAKASHVILI SPEAKS AT NDI-SAIS EVENT

Shortly after his election, President Mikheil Saakashvili of Georgia traveled to the United States. During his visit he addressed a Washington D.C. audience at a February 24th event hosted jointly by NDI and the Central Asia-Caucuses Institute of the School of Advanced International

Studies (SAIS) at Johns Hopkins University.

In his speech, President Saakashvili discussed his government’s plans to address the many challenges facing Georgia, such as reducing corruption, building stronger governance institu-

tions, and strengthening the country’s economy. He emphasized how the events that brought him to power showed that peaceful, democratic succession is possible in that region of the world.



Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili addresses the audience.

Photo by Kavesh Sardari

“The ‘rose revolution’ again demonstrated that democratic aspirations can be realized even in hostile environments. That unmistakable message has inspired democrats throughout the region.”

– NDI President Kenneth Wollack in welcoming President Saakashvili

CUBA

Payá Calls for National Dialogue on Democracy in Cuba

On December 12, Oswaldo Payá, the leader of the Varela Project and the recipient of NDI's 2002 Democracy Award, invited all Cubans to participate in a National Dialogue on a peaceful democratic transition in Cuba.

As a starting point for the discussion, Payá prepared a 100-page working document that focused on issues such as multiparty democracy, freedom for political prisoners, the return of exiles, privatization, and free education and health care. This document is being circulated on the island and in Cuban exile communities around the world. After incorporating feedback, a plan for a democratic transition, designed and directed by Cubans, will be submitted to the Cuban National Assembly with calls for a referendum on the plan. In addition, the inclusive dialogue process is designed to help Cubans understand more about the issues that a transition process in Cuba would entail.

With support from the Spanish Foundation for Analysis and Social Studies (FAES), led by then-Prime Minister José María Aznar, NDI organized a January conference in Washington, D.C. that

“In our country, in the last few years, a peaceful civic movement has been created, one with a profound sense of humanity, that gathers all the suffering and the experiences of our people, and instead of translating them into new confrontations, promotes reconciliation and freedom from hate and fear.”

– Oswaldo Payá in a March 18 message from Cuba on the first anniversary of the arrests of 75 dissidents.



Oswaldo Payá

brought together a diverse group of academics, human rights activists and policy analysts to offer feedback on the working document. Although still in draft form, analysts pointed out that such a plan is unprecedented for Cuba. Reuters reported that the Payá initiative represents “the most complete plan ever presented for a peaceful transition to democracy and a market oriented economy.”

The National Dialogue builds on the achievements of the Varela Project, a grassroots movement calling for a referendum on open elections, the release of political prisoners, free enterprise, and freedom of speech and association. The Project draws upon a provision in the Cuban

Constitution that allows citizens to introduce legislative initiatives when accompanied by 10,000 signatures. Despite efforts by the Cuban government to repress this movement, and the arrests a year ago of 75 democracy activists, all of whom were summarily tried and convicted, more than 25,000 citizens have signed the Varela Project petition. The petition continues to attract signatures.

NDI continues to work with the International Committee to Support the Varela Project to gather international support and build solidarity for Cuban democracy efforts, as well as to offer comparative information on democratic transition experiences around the world.

EURASIA

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parties or their message, and led some major opposition candidates to boycott the presidential race when their parties failed to pass the minimum threshold for representation in the Duma.

For the first time, a coalition of civic groups, called the VOICE Association, mounted a nationwide election monitoring effort. The Association trained and deployed thousands of volunteers who observed the polling in regions that comprise two-thirds of the electorate. It concluded that the parliamentary polls not only fell short of international standards, but failed to comply with Russian legislation. The group found unexplained discrepancies in vote tabulations particularly



A VOICE volunteer hands out water at the “Clean Water – Clean Elections” voter education drive in Barnaul, Russia.

troubling. During the presidential election, VOICE reported on what appeared to be systematic efforts to inflate turnout and influence voting. It also reported that “for the first time, many of our observers

faced open hostility while trying to do their work.”

VOICE also faced a hostile media, which refused to cover its press conferences and reports. The international media, however, reported on the Association's findings, which helped expose the elections' short-comings to a wider audience. VOICE has since joined with other civic groups to renew efforts to promote more democratic elections. Recommendations include increased monitoring,

revised electoral legislation, improved litigation of violations, and stronger citizen participation in promoting a more open and transparent process.

New Iraqi Parties and Civic Groups Begin to Organize

A virtual explosion of politics in Iraq followed the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime. However, thus far, there have been limited avenues for political participation for those parties and individuals that could form a constituency for peace, stability and democracy in Iraq.

There is an urgent need for democratic education, for political party strengthening, for coalition building and for material assistance to both established and emerging democratic movements and organizations. Few of the new parties and movements being formed by businesspeople, professionals and more progressive tribal interests have the organizing skills needed to participate effectively in a political process, and to build political coalitions that could cross ethnic and sectarian lines. Iraqi women, in particular, face numerous obstacles in attempting to enter politics.



NDI Iraq staff discuss coalition building with Iraqi parties.

Operating with an experienced international staff of political and civic practitioners, NDI has been conducting programs in Iraq since last June, when it carried out some of the first public opinion research in the country. Since then, the Institute has served as a resource for hundreds of fledgling political parties and civic groups, and is currently working on programs to help strengthen these organizations over the long term. Its civic programs are designed to help groups develop organizational structures and strategies for

becoming actively involved in the political process. The Institute's political party programs are aimed at helping parties develop individualized training plans for their local and regional branches by conducting a series of training workshops on organizational development, recruitment, research, message development, and women's participation.

Up to 500 Iraqis attend NDI's weekly gatherings on political participation and advocacy. These meetings have led to the formation of a grouping of 20 civic groups called the NGO League, and coalitions of small political parties are emerging.

Recently, 21 parties from one of these coalitions, the Iraqi Democratic Conference, attended a workshop in Hilla. Participants from that workshop subsequently organized a larger conference in Baghdad of 192 political parties and movements, civil society organizations and unions. The purpose of the conference was to help member organizations expand their support base, and to provide them with the skills to respond to the concerns and



Attendees from diverse political parties learn about voter contact, recruitment, and message development.



Ten political parties and civil society NGOs attended NDI's Kirkuk training on capacity building.



A coalition-building conference organized by parties that have received NDI training.

needs of prospective voters and to reach out to key constituencies such as women, students and pensioners.

NDI is also developing programs to help and encourage women to participate more effectively and in greater numbers in the political process. One of the first steps is the formation of networks of activists to organize, reach out, and advocate on behalf of women. NDI is holding a series of public speaking workshops to help women communicate their message. The first round of workshops was attended by a broad cross-section of women from political parties, civil society activists and local government representatives, including prospective candidates for public office.

AS WE GO TO PRINT...

Congress of Democrats from the Islamic World

Government and political leaders from predominantly Muslim countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East gathered in Istanbul, Turkey, in April and issued a *Platform for Democratic Governance* that calls attention to the principles of democratic governance being practiced in many countries throughout the Islamic world.

“Principles of Islamic culture and values include tolerance, justice and participation, together with peace,” the Platform declares. “These principles provide the basis for democratic governance and a more peaceful and prosperous world.” The Platform calls for multiparty elections administered by independent election commissions, independent media, accountable political parties, freedom of information, equal political participation by women, and oversight of governments by parliaments and civil society.

The Platform concludes, “We commit ourselves to give concrete expression to these principles through follow-up initiatives and a network of democrats from the Islamic world.”

Delegates to the Congress — including current and former heads of government, cabinet ministers, and parliamentary and party leaders — met in Istanbul in mid-April to discuss their personal experiences with democratic governance, highlight progress made in many predominately Muslim countries, and address challenges that face the movement toward

democratic reform. The gathering was conceived nearly two years ago by a group of leading democratic reformers from predominately Muslim nations. It was sponsored by NDI, the United Nations Development Programme and the Turkish Democracy Foundation with support from 16 governments and foundations from the United States, Europe and the Middle East.

The next edition of the newsletter will highlight the Congress and the Platform for Democratic Governance. In the meantime, please visit www.cdiw.org for more information.

NDI to Host International Political Leaders at Democratic Convention

NDI will once again host more than 500 international leaders at the Democratic National Convention to be held in Boston July 26-29. The NDI-sponsored International Leaders Forum (ILF), which has been held at every Democratic Convention since 1988, will bring together heads of government, cabinet ministers, parliamentarians, political party leaders and U.S.-based ambassadors from more than 100 countries. They will observe the Convention proceedings and participate in a series of seminars on U.S. politics and foreign policy issues. The bi-partisan seminars will be led by members of Congress and other elected officials, journalists and political experts. The ILF is supported by private contributions. If you would like additional information, please contact NDI's development department at (202) 728-5500.

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