



# CIVIC UPDATE

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A Publication of the Citizen Participation Team

[www.ndi.org](http://www.ndi.org)

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This Civic Update edition examines NDI's support of voter education and get-out-the-vote (GOTV) campaigns that are designed to encourage informed voting and promote sustained activism after the elections as well.

Program highlights from Albania, Cambodia, Hong Kong, Kosovo and Malawi demonstrate the possibility and process of using elections as a way to organize citizens for long-term political engagement. Several approaches are discussed, including the use of community platforms, issue-based candidate forums,



**Don't Complain Vote:** A group of volunteers in Kosovo get the message out: "Do you Want electricity, water, a good economy, improved infrastructure....Don't Complain Vote!"

voter guides and GOTV/advocacy coalitions.

*Aaron Azelton, Senior Advisor*

## THANKS

*The Citizen Participation Team would like to thank all the regional staff members who provided assistance with compiling this Update.*

## CITIZEN ADVOCACY FORUMS BUILD RELATIONS BETWEEN VOTERS AND MPs IN MALAWI

*The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) has been working in Malawi for the past ten years. Since 2001, with joint funding from the British Department for International Development (DFID) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), NDI's work has focused on proactive engagement between parliament and citizen groups. The program aims to strengthen citizen participation in the legislative, governance and public decision-making processes. As part of this endeavor, NDI's Malawi team took advantage of Malawi's May 2004 presidential and parliamentary elections to help citizens organize themselves locally and begin to build accountable relationships with future members of parliament.*

## FORUMS IN MALAWI

## CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

With joint funding from the British Department for International Development (DIFID) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) has been working to strengthen the capacity of the legislature to respond to citizen needs and to improve the interface between the parliament and civil society in Malawi. The goal of NDI's program in Malawi is to enable broad segments of Malawian society to participate more fully in their nation's developing democracy.

In the months leading up to Malawi's May 20th presidential and parliamentary elections NDI, the International Republican institute (IRI) and the Institute for Multi-party Democracy (IMD) co-sponsored the "Citizen Advocacy Forums" (CAF) or public debates in twelve constituencies throughout the country. The forums were designed to promote greater citizen participation in the legislative process, raise the visibility of citizen concerns and render citizens more informed in the march toward polling day. The forums also paved the way for Malawian civil society organizations (CSOs) to hold elected representatives accountable to promises made during the campaign period.

Prior to the forums, NDI developed the concept; identified the criteria and locations for the events; facilitated the production of a code of conduct and terms of references; preformed several rounds of consultations to secure buy-in and ownership from all stakeholders; organized an advisory board; identified the partners with whom to work with; provided technical assistance and funding to CSOs; developed the methodology for all aspects of the forum at the community level; provided guidance through all phases of the program, and organized publicity and associated media coverage.

One major component of the preparations was to identify issues for debate and to prepare the participants for the events. NDI partnered with 10 CSOs to define the methodology for issue identification through focus groups discussions (FGDs) and held a training event on survey methodol-

ogy and the overall conduct of the forums. Through focus group research, NDI assisted the civic groups in refining issues to raise at the forums, with a special emphasis on legislative efforts to increase agricultural production, promote gender equality, strengthen the rule of law, and improve basic education. IRI, which is currently working with political parties in Malawi, trained candidates on public speaking and undertook subject-oriented briefings to help prepare the designated candidates for the forums.

During the forums, citizens posed the issues selected through the FGDs to the legislative candidates and asked them to articulate how they would address community concerns if elected to public office. Citizens were also able to raise their own questions during ad-hoc question periods. The debate topics included improved health care, higher quality education, reduced corruption, enhanced agricultural and social service provisions and good governance. Among the range of issues identified, agriculture ranked as one of the highest priority concerns in both urban and rural constituencies—underscoring that Malawi's overwhelmingly poor citizens depend on elected leaders to address their most basic needs.



**Full House:** Enthusiastic participation at the Citizen Advocacy Forums lead to large crowds

## VOTERS MEET MPs IN MALAWI

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“We felt that this was an opportunity for voters to screen candidates and be able to make an informed decision when voting.”

– Moses Mkandawire of Church and Society Program Livingstonia Synod *Malawi Nation* May 5, 2004

reading the code of conduct at the opening of the debate. At the Chiradzulu West CFA, which was deemed exemplary by an NDI-organized advisory board, six political opponents displayed great tolerance and unity, even embracing one another before the opening of the forum.

The success of CAF is largely attributable to extensive consultations held at the national and constituency levels. NDI obtained guidance from the Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC), traditional authorities, Malawi police, media figures, the Journalists Association of Malawi (JAMA), the National Initiative for Civic Education (NICE), the Catholic Commission for Peace and Justice (CCAPJ), the Public Affairs Committee, Secretaries General of major political parties and prominent sitting MPs from a few selected constituencies, including Honorable Louis Chimango. These partners assisted in developing the concept, determining the conduct of the forums and identifying the constituencies where the forums should be held.

*For more information concerning NDI's Malawi program contact Brionne Dawson at [bdawson@ndi.org](mailto:bdawson@ndi.org)*

Over 33,500 voters and 83 candidates were represented at the forums, which generated widespread coverage in print and broadcast media including *The Malawi Nation*, *The Chronicle*, *Television Malawi* and several radio stations. “Candidates Put To Test,” “NDI to Stir Political Debates,” and “NDI Supports NGOs on General Elections” were among the featured headlines.

At one of these events in the highly contested Lilongwe City Central Constituency, where political violence had been a concern, over 8,000 citizens gathered for an opportunity to hear legislative candidates debate the issues citizens identified. All six of the candidates engaged in fiery discussion, while violence was mitigated due in large part to in-depth consultations on violence prevention. In addition, NDI's civic partner, the Center for Youth and Children's Affairs (CEYCA) played a key role by

## COOL LINKS

The institute for Global Ethics has developed the Citizens Field Guide to Clean Campaigns, a how to manual for citizens to use in promoting better candidate behavior through the promulgation of codes of conduct. You can access this guide by following the link and completing a free registration process.

<http://www.globalethics.org/pub/default.tmpl>



## SYNERGYNET KEEPS A CLOSE EYE ON HONG KONG'S LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

*In 2002, NDI opened a field office in Hong Kong to help make Hong Kong's political processes more participatory. NDI has been partnering with the local organization SynergyNet, a policy think-tank organized in 2002 to enhance the quality of governance and promote economic and social progress. This partnership was renewed in 2004. Over the last two years, SynergyNet has produced voter guides and an annual governance reviews with NDI assistance.*

With NDI's support, SynergyNet created and distributed voter guides throughout Hong Kong prior to the September 2004 Legislative Council (LegCo) Elections. The guides informed voters about the candidates and their policy positions. SynergyNet produced five different guides which covered the following issues: economy and infrastructure; environment, public hygiene and public utilities; culture and education; key decisions by LegCo members; and human rights and political development. All of the guides provided voters with access to the LegCo candidates' platforms and their voting records.

The 2004 voter guides were created in part due to the positive response to the NDI-supported 2003 District Council Voter Guides.

In 2003, with support and guidance from NDI, SynergyNet undertook its first comprehensive review and produced a report entitled *A Governance Review Report: Hong Kong Deserves Better Governance*. This

review rated the government based on five criteria: accountability; responsiveness; transparency and openness; fairness and predictability; and participation. SynergyNet followed up on the 2003 effort by producing a report in 2004 using the same five criteria as the 2003 report to evaluate governance in Hong Kong.

*For information concerning NDI's continued work in Hong Kong, please contact Anne Tsai at [atsai@ndi.org](mailto:atsai@ndi.org)*

**Keeping the Voters Informed:** A voter guide from the 2000-2004 legislative session that reports on Key Decisions by LegCo Members.



### COOL LINKS

The 2004 review report of the Governance Review Project of SynergyNet, *"Hong Kong Governance in Capacity Crisis"*, will explore the governance issues further, within the context of what the HKSAR Government might do by way of institutional and policy responses to public expectations and demands. It will also consider the impact of the 12 September LegCo election on Hong Kong's governance and institutional relationships (e.g. between the executive and LegCo), the future prospect of political parties, the principal officials accountability system and the changing role of the senior civil service. To view a copy of this report follow the link below.

**Http: //synergynet.org.hk/en\_m1\_1\_new.htm**



## Regular Face-to-Face Interactions in Cambodia

Since 1992, NDI has worked with Cambodian civic groups and political parties. In support of the 2002 Commune Council Elections and the 2003 National Assembly elections, NDI helped NGOs set an important precedent by organizing a series of candidate debates and producing voter guides. Building on the candidate forums, NDI is now helping NGOs organize regular constituency dialogues in select provinces. This has led to increased interaction between citizens and elected officials.

As reported in the November 2003 Civic Update, NDI helped local NGOs organize multi-party candidate debates. For the first time, candidates from competing political parties, including the three main political parties, came together and publicly debated policy issues. In addition to helping voters make a more informed choice on election day, the debates also created a foundation for, and expectations about, future interactions between citizens and elected officials.

Cambodian parliamentarians have not traditionally returned to their constituencies to discuss problems and policy alternatives with the community. This is beginning to change, however, through NDI and NDI effort to help local NGOs and citizen activists organize *Constituency Dialogues* with elected officials. The program is intended to increase the responsiveness and accountability of parliamentarians, by facilitating regular discussions between them and their constituents. Presently, the program is being carried out in three provinces, with plans for a 2005 ex-

pansion into 5 additional provinces.

Working with local NGOs, NDI recruited and trained 40 community volunteers to take the lead in organizing the regular dialogues and maintaining relationships with the parliamentarians. Those selected were trained on their roles/responsibilities, facilitation skills, negotiation and lobbying skills, community organizing, information gathering and analysis, basic planning and report writing, communication and public speaking.

The constituency dialogues take place monthly and are often held in more remote locations. Attendance at meetings ranges from 200 – 300 constituents from various political affiliations. The dialogues are typically organized around a particular topic or theme, leaving time for questions and comments from citizens and responses from the officials.

Government officials have taken action as a result of the dialogues. For example, volunteers have collected data on the lack of school teachers in rural areas of Siem Reap province and submitted it to parliamentarians who promised a discussion with the education authorities. Also, the Ministry of Interior issued an official directive to local authorities in all 24 provinces

and municipalities to re-activate village patrols after CVs reported an increase in thefts and asked for the patrols.

The dialogue program also addresses a general lack of awareness and education on the part of the public in regard to the roles and responsibilities of parliament, and a perception on the public's part that parliament is a closed and unresponsive—or unimportant in their daily lives. It is an extension of the candidate debate activities, in that it continues public dialogue on political issues. The program brought democratic discussions to the local level and it engages NGOs, community members, and parliamentarians about local problems and solutions.

*For more information on NDI's programs in Cambodia, please contact Kourtney Pompei at [kpompi@ndi.org](mailto:kpompi@ndi.org)*

**"As an ordinary citizen I never dared to dream of having such an opportunity to work closely with the MPs, but now I see that it is possible in a democratic society".**

**-Said one CV**

## THE CIVIC COMMUNITY CONTINUES TO GROW IN ALBANIA

The November 2003 Civic Update issue reported on the development and use of community platforms by local-level "initiative committees." These committees emerged from NDI Civic Forum program which began in 1999. The committees used the community platforms to open dialogue about local issues with candidates in the 2003 municipal elections. Since then, the committees have continued to draw on the priorities outlined in the platform, as a means of holding public officials accountable to campaign pledges.

Prior to 2003 local elections, the Civic Forum program helped citizens create community platforms, which detailed local priorities gleaned from returned public opinion surveys. Once collected, the survey information formed the basis for discussions with candidates. Since the 2003 elections, NDI has guided the creation of citizen networks made up of Civic Forum participants and other citizens from the community. With only a small amount of support from NDI, the networks have pushed elected officials to act on the 2003 community platforms. Using the organizing skills developed through participation in NDI's Civic Forum program the networks have held both town hall and individual meetings with elected representatives to discuss and evaluate

***NDI has created a publication entitled *The Possibilities of Democracy*, which relates stories of how ordinary citizens were empowered to change their communities for the better as a result of their involvement in Civic Forum.***

the local government performance in terms of the Community Platforms.

In Kavaje, a district in the western part of Albania, more than 70 citizens from 12 villages in two communes planned, convened, and facilitated dialogues with elected representatives.

Two networks in Golem and Helmas in the Kavaje district held accountability town hall meetings with their local officials. During these meetings, they confronted their mayors about which campaign promises they had fulfilled

**"Civic Forum made us understand that small initiatives undertaken by the citizens are important for they improve the community,"**

**Nafije Sheshi, Kavaje**

during the eight months in office, what local priorities were funded in the 2004 budgets, and they demanded clarification and a voice in developing the 2005 local budgets. Networks in Bathore and Bërxull in the Tirana district monitored their local councils throughout the spring and summer and presented their first reports to local officials, the media, and other community members in early September. Similar instances have taken place across Albania.

Today, NDI is continuing



**Working Hard:** Volunteers collect community surveys.

to advise the local networks. NDI, Albanian field coordinators prepared an information dossier for each citizen group that includes different tools to assist them in their future efforts of developing community platforms, organizing town hall meetings, engaging the media, speaking in public, participating in the local budget process, and monitoring the local government. In Kavaja a recent meeting coordinated by NDI set goals and priorities for continuing to increase citizen participation in local budgeting, and for the creation of new citizen platforms for the upcoming general elections. Looking toward the future, the success of community platforms at the local level, and the motivation of the local networks to continue to engage candidates and elected officials will hopefully lead to more responsive and accountable government bodies and more engaged citizens.

*For more information concerning program activities in Albania, contact Erin Mathews at [emathews@ndi.org](mailto:emathews@ndi.org) or Megan Unangst at [munangst@ndi.org](mailto:munangst@ndi.org)*



## KOSOVARs TOLD, “DON’T COMPLAIN, VOTE”

Since 1999, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) has worked with political parties on fundamental elements of election preparation, organizational management, and member engagement; the Central Assembly on basic legislative functions, developing a rules of procedure, committee functions, and constituent outreach; and civil society organizations (CSOs) on political participation through citizen education, nonpartisan election and government monitoring, and issue-specific advocacy. Overall, NDI’s programs support the development of a transparent, accountable and representative political system and the Institute’s assistance integrates, particularly at the municipal level, individual program components – political party development, legislative strengthening, and civic participation – to further strengthening Kosovo-wide institutions.

On October 23, 2004, voters in Kosovo went to the polls to vote for Central Assembly representatives. In response to summer

polling data that indicated that turnout may be lower for this, the second Assembly election, NDI worked with two local NGOs (the Advocacy and Training Resource Center – ATRC and the Kososo Women’s Network – KWN) to recruit and train volunteers for a national, non-partisan get-out-the-vote campaign. Since 2003, NDI has worked with approximately 70 civic groups from 15 municipalities. These groups all monitor the work of their local legislatures and use this information to advocate to decision-makers on specific issues. Together, the groups constitute an informal network of civic organizers and activists. For the GOTV effort, NDI drew on the network to recruit, in relatively short time period, Albanian, Bosnia, Turkish, Ashkali, and Serbian volunteers.

NDI trained a total of 2,153 volunteers within a seven-day period just two weeks before the election. Volunteers were trained on techniques for conducting a door-to-door campaign, including script development, message delivery and staying safe. Volunteers were given t-shirts with the GOTV logo which depicted issues citizens had identified as most important to them in NDI public opinion research (electricity, water, roads, education, salaries, and final status). Volunteers were also given posters to hang with the same logo, as



### MOS U ANKO, VOTO!

A Simple Message: “Don’t Complain Vote!”

well as educational pamphlets outlining three reasons why people should vote: every vote counts; your vote determines your future; and your vote shows your opinion on final status.

In the final five days before the campaign NDI volunteers visited over 100,000 homes to deliver a non-partisan GOTV message. In some Serbian villages, however, volunteers chose not to go door-to-door, but only hang posters, because the climate among the Serbians regarding participation in the election was mixed. In larger cities, such as Pristina, volunteers were so enthused about spreading the message, they also went into the town square to distribute brochures in the evening as people left their offices for home. In several cities, the volunteers organized a march through the town to convey the message. In every region where volunteers disseminated the message, the campaign generated media attention.



**Reaching Everyone:** A volunteer distributes handouts urging people to get out and vote.



**VOTE**

**CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7**

NDIs partner CSOs and all the volunteers were very enthusiastic about participating in the first-ever non-partisan canvassing campaign in Kosovo. For many volunteers this was the first election in which they had cast a ballot or participated in an advocacy campaign, while others have a long history of political participation. The CSOs used the opportunity to revitalize some of their old volunteer contacts and remind them about the campaign, and also used it as an opportunity to recruit new volunteers to their organizations. These relationships will prove to be valuable in the upcoming year as NDI partner CSOs would like to develop a second Kosovo-wide advocacy campaign to advocate for changes in the electoral code to include open lists and/or districts before the next municipal elections in 2006.

*For more information concerning NDI's programs in Kosovo please contact Annisa Wanat at [awanat@ndi.org](mailto:awanat@ndi.org)*

**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*

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*Contributions Welcome!*

**NEW FACES ON THE CP TEAM**

**In September the Citizen Participation Team welcomed Sky Mehringer and Megan Henkels as Fall Interns.**

Sky is a senior at The George Washington University in Washington, DC majoring in Economics and International Affairs. She has held a variety of positions including an internship for Representative Susan Davis; research assistant for a professor of economics at GWU; and a research assistant for the think tank Corporación de Investigaciones Sociales in Santiago, Chile. Currently, Sky is working on tracking NDI Youth Participation activities, and Indigenous NGO Capacity Building. She will be graduating in May 2005.

Megan is a graduate student at American University in the School for International Service. She is pursuing a masters in International Politics with a concentration in Democratization. She graduated from Appalachian State University in 2000, and spent the years between schools living in Costa Rica and working for Family Court in Greenville, South Carolina. Recently she held the position of project coordinator for the Ashburn Institute She will be graduating in May of 2005.

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**Next Civic Update**

**STAY IN THE LOOP WITH [Civic@ndi.org](mailto: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. Also the Citizen Participation Team sends out weekly program resources.

If you do not currently receive emails from the [civic@ndi.org](mailto: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](mailto:aaron@ndi.org).