



CIVIC UPDATE

A Publication of the Citizen Participation Team

Positive Partnerships with Local Groups

Welcome to this issue of the Civic Update. This issue highlights some of the different partnerships that NDI has with local civic groups.

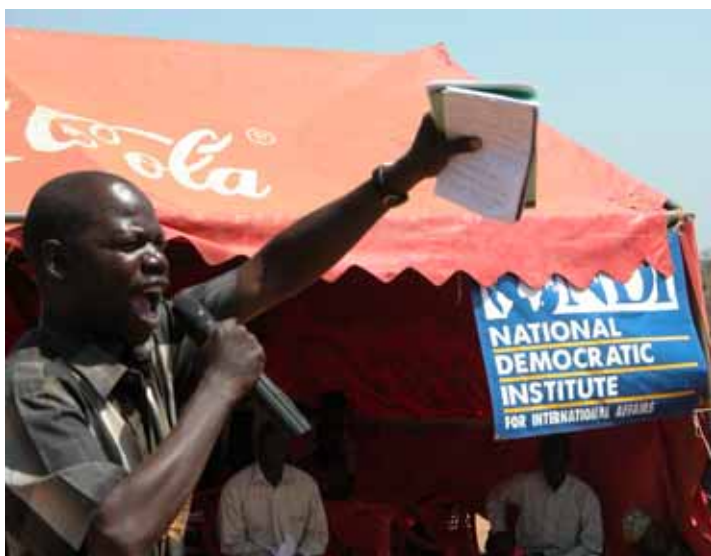
NDI regularly partners with local civic groups around the

world to help them develop the capabilities needed to undertake organized political action, such as civic and voter education, issue-based advocacy campaigns, political process monitoring, and community

organizing. In many ways, these partnerships are the cornerstone of NDI's citizen participation work. When we talk about "sustainability," we are often talking about the sustained activism of particular partner organizations and the political changes that result. Over the years, NDI has learned a number of lessons when it comes to establishing effective *developmental partnerships* and enhancing citizen participation in politics. Some of these lessons are reflected in recent research reports produced by the Citizen Participation Team. Additional lessons can be found in the articles of this Update, which examine a variety of partnerships.

Enjoy!

—Aaron Azelton,
Director of Citizen
Participation Programs



A Ugandan citizen speaks out at an NDI-partnered political parties dialogue at an IDP camp.

Photo by Greg Starosky.

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Helping Partners Get Out the Vote in Northern Uganda

Northern Uganda is a challenging environment in which to work with partners. Nearly 20 years of civil war, more than 2 million citizens living in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps, longstanding tribal divisions, a rapid transition to multi-party democracy and competitive elections, and a ruling government hostile to the political participation of civil society organizations (CSOs) – these are just a few of the challenges that NDI faced in northern Uganda when conducting a voter educa-

tion and get-out-the-vote campaign for the February 2006 elections.

Worried that low turnout could significantly weaken citizen ownership of the elections and exacerbate existing conflicts, NDI assisted civic groups in northern Uganda to help educate voters, encourage political participation and discourage violence. An International Organization for Migration (IOM) Political Rights and Enfranchisement report from June 2005,

highlighted obstacles to political participation, such as a lack of information, insufficient civic education and the remoteness of communities in northern Uganda. Some of these factors partly explained the low voter turnout in northern Uganda for the July 2005 constitutional referendum. The Ugandan Electoral Commission (UEC) recorded average voter turnout in the northern Gulu district was around 17 percent, compared to the

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national average of 47 percent.

"Past experience in Uganda has taught all [citizens] one important lesson—when it comes to politics, power and corruption, expect the worst and do not get involved," NDI's Resident Senior Program Officer Greg Starosky said. To overcome these obstacles, NDI partnered with civic groups that had links with northern communities and IDP camps residents. "We looked for groups who were 'outside' of main stream (i.e., not donor-driven) civil society and could be incorporated into the election process. This usually meant working with the most disenfranchised people, such as people with disabilities, former child soldiers and women," said Starosky. NDI partnered with six organizations. Some of the partner organizations had been around for years and were members of national coalitions, while other partners were relatively new and community-based. In each case, however, the organizations lacked any experience with sustained political activism.

"NDI's objective was to identify organizations that had some existing capacity and the ability to reach into the different communities and camps, rather than organizations with political experience," confirmed Director of Citizen Participation Aaron Azelton. "Once the groups were identified, NDI helped them understand the election process and the possibility of their participation. The next step was to help them develop a work plan and figure out practical, face-to-face tactics for reaching voters, which is probably the most difficult step in this process."

For the most part, NDI provided very basic assistance to the groups and introduced tools that would be needed for effective voter education and GOTV activities. The tools focused mainly on planning, logistics and reporting. NDI delivered the assistance in a way that emphasized learning-by-doing. This entailed very little training, but a great deal

of coaching and feedback as the groups put the tools into practice. NDI also provided small grants to help them to better manage and account for funds as they carried out activities that reached thousands of citizens throughout northern Uganda.

One group in particular, Charity for Peace Foundation, discovered community theater as an entertaining way to get out the vote. Taking the content from the "National Civic Education Program Handbook," the group enacted dramas that drew on the real life experiences of IDPs. The performances imparted lessons on civic rights how to develop an active citizen base who will participate on Election Day.

During the days leading up to the elections, NDI also helped the Gulu Disabled Persons Union (GPDU) hold 12 GOTV concerts throughout northern Uganda. This collaboration led the hearing impaired persons' network to appeal to NDI to support a voter education program with its community too. In re-

sponse, NDI assisted a one day training for 75 hearing impaired participants on the elections. Event leaders were amazed by the participants' enthusiasm and how little they knew about the elections. This confirmed an IRI poll that found more than 47% of the population did not know about the election, let alone the candidates' platforms.



Partner group Charity for Peace imparts lessons about the election process through community theater. Photo by Greg Starosky.

"Whether or not the hearing impaired population swayed voting turn out to an all time high, the program was well attended and received positive feedback from participants," said Starosky. NDI also assisted the UEC to host public dialogues between political candidates and residents of

the camps. These discussions generated a great deal of anger and public outcry directed toward the parties as it was one of the first times IDP camp residents had an opportunity to voice their opinions and concerns directly to candidates and party members.

NEW RESEARCH FINDINGS FROM THE CITIZEN PARTICIPATION TEAM

Over the past year, the Citizen Participation Team has researched NDI's developmental partnerships with politically active civic organizations and drew conclusions about what makes this particular type of relationship work. Team members interviewed DC staff members and conducted field research in Romania, where the Institute has working relationships with eight local partners. The resulting paper *"Creating Developmental Partnerships with Local Organizations and Using Subawards to Promote Organizational Development"* highlights three key dimensions of successful developmental partnerships: NDI created "intimate" working relationships with the partners; NDI clearly structured the relationship using MOU for example; and NDI delivered assistance through a process of "guided practice." The paper also illustrates how NDI staff members can put the findings into operation. Copies of the paper can be found on new versions of the Citizen Participation CD-ROM, the team's Blog, or by requesting a copy from a team member.

Preaching to the Choir from the Same Book: An Invaluable Organizing Tool for Partners

By Greg Starosky
Senior Program Officer in northern Uganda

In northern Uganda, NDI ran an intensive, short-term civic and voter education program in the lead up to the Presidential and Parliamentary elections held on February 27th. As there were snap elections, we had limited time to coordinate with our six CSO partners in conducting activities including drama presentations, workshops, training seminars, radio programs and GOTV concerts. A formidable challenge I faced was making certain that our partners were distributing messages that were based upon accurate and reliable information.

Of the six partners we selected, few of them had ever participated in a civic-voter education or advocacy campaign. Like most Ugandans, members of these groups lacked a comprehensive understanding of how the election process worked. Fortunately, action was taken to overcome this obstacle by a consortium of international donors that came together to support pre-election activities. One of the products of their work was *Building a Better Uganda*, a book that explained the democratic voting process from A - Z. I could not have hoped for a better organizing tool. *Building a Better Uganda* quickly became a guidebook for developing the content of our civic-voter education activities. The book helped us develop strong, concise and on-point messages. Most importantly, the book guaranteed that our partners shared a common set of election information.

I would encourage any NDI program working with a number of different partner organizations to take the time to either develop or acquire a similar guidebook. A comprehensive manual that can easily be distributed among partners will help manage NDI's partnerships and keep the messages content consistent from one group to another.

Building a Better Uganda can be found on the Citizen Participation Team's CD-ROM Library.

Expanding Partner Capacity in Kenya

For its Africa Political Party Finance Initiative (APPFT), NDI awarded year-long sub-grants to four civic partners in different African countries. NDI identified experienced groups that could conduct program activities without too much NDI oversight or instruction. Among these groups, the Centre for Governance and Development (CGD) in Kenya emerged as a model partner. The CGD is a policy research and advocacy NGO that works to establish a permanent culture of good governance in Kenya. NDI's program in Kenya supported CGD as it raised awareness about how party financing practices impact governance and development and to build momentum for reform initiatives.

An analysis of the CGD-NDI partnership suggests that three fundamental components helped ensure a positive relationship: first, CGD pre-existing leadership and demonstrated capacity; second, an opportune political environment; and third, a mutually beneficial working relationship between CGD and NDI's Kenya field office.

Pre-Existing Leadership

CGD began 11 years before it first partnered with NDI and already had the capacity to campaign for party reform in Kenya. "They were already tackling the issues our program outlined," comments SEA Senior Program Manager Sef Ashiabor. "They had a vision of where they wanted to go with the partnership." Thus NDI's role was to assist in expanding upon what CGD already had in place, for example, building its resource and contact base, organizing events that addressed specific issues and providing professional input where needed. "The partnership has tremendously expanded CGD's horizon regarding the options and possibili-

ties of party finance reform advocacy," remarks CGD Executive Director Kennedy Masime.

Timing Activities with Political Environment

Following the Kenyan national elections in February 2003, there was widespread talk of government change and reform for the first time since independence. Given this political environment, the APPFT activities helped to bring into the mainstream discussions on party reform that were underway. In 2004, the government highlighted the need for reform when it introduced a new constitution that provided for the regulation and funding of political parties.

Mutual Benefits

By the end of the project, the partnership had enabled CGD's to expand its profile and strengthen relationships with other civic groups, public officials and donors. With NDI support, CGD sponsored a series of roundtables and workshops that culminated in a party finance stakeholders' forum. At all of these events, political party, election administration and civil society representatives joined forces to develop strategies for civil society groups to engage political parties and propose party finance law reform. NDI played a critical role in encouraging political leaders to attend. CGD and other civic groups took the forum to the next level by mounting an advocacy campaign to guarantee that their recommendations were incorporated in the draft legislation.

CGD has established a growing coalition of civil society organizations that are working to institute a regulatory framework for acqui-

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Building a Partnership with an Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

In forming a partnership with the nascent Indonesian Parliamentary Center (IPC), in early 2005 NDI's Governance team in Jakarta used a new tool to build a strong foundation for this relationship.

While NDI has for many years used MOUs with local partners, this was the first time that a team used the *Partnership Toolbox* to draft such a document from scratch. (Subsequently, NDI country teams in Angola and Sudan have also found this toolbox useful when drafting and signing MOUs with partners.)

The Partnership Toolbox was created as part of a series of workshops conducted by the World Wildlife Fund (UK) (www.worldwildlife.org) with the help of INTRAC (www.intrac.org) to explore partnerships. The Toolbox simply consists of a series of questions that can be asked by both sides when a partnership is being considered.

With the help of NDI's Senior Advisor for Citizen Participation Programs Jim Della-Giacoma the NDI team in Jakarta used the Partnership Agreement Tool from the Toolbox to guide the drafting of the MOU with the IPC. The beauty of

the Partnership Agreement Tool is that it is just 25 logically structured questions that can promote discussion about the key issues that will be the strengths and stresses of any partnership.

A fluent speaker of Indonesian, Jim was visiting Jakarta for another project and was able to facilitate this first session with IPC using the Partnership Agreement Tool. Resident Program Director Tom Cormier and Program Director Djaydai Hanan finalized the discussions in the following weeks and the MOU was signed in August 2005 by NDI Country Director Paul Rowland. The final agreement was produced in both English and Indonesian and is now available on the Citizen Participation CD and has been used as an example for other teams around the world.

In terms of content, the MOU articulates the reason for the partnership, the specific objectives that NDI and IPC want to accomplish and how NDI will provide technical and monetary assistance. The MOU underscores a

relationship between NDI and IPC is focused on NDI's role as a provider of the technical assistance and works to prevent the common misconception by some partners that NDI is a "donor".

While the content of the MOU is interesting, it is more the process used to create it that should be viewed as a model. The benefit of starting the drafting of the MOU in an inclusive, face-to-face manner means that the partner can see that NDI has not come to the table with a pre-set agenda. It promotes ownership of the agreement by both sides and encourages discussion of expectations and difficult issues, such as conflict resolution, at the earliest stages of the relationship. It reinforces NDI commitment to working in a transparent and accountable way.

Countries where NDI programs have recently used MOUs:

- Angola
- Indonesia
- Mexico
- Liberia
- Sudan



Kenyan citizens line up to vote for the November 2003 constitutional referendum. The timing of NDI's program coincided with the national political environment.

Photo by Jim Della-Giacoma.

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sition, management and disclosure of political party finance. According to CGD, NDI was instrumental in helping to expand their contacts and association with other international groups and Kenyan leaders working on political party reform. Ultimately, NDI's support allowed CGD to restructure a debate that was already taking place and to increase its influence on party finance reform.



A Progressive Long-term Partnership in Nicaragua

Nicaragua's first nonpartisan national election observation group, *Etica y Transparencia*, began 10 years ago with the assistance of NDI. Since its conception, the nature of NDI's relationship with ET has progressed steadily and significantly. At the beginning, NDI assisted ET in establishing core organizational elements, such as a workable mission statement and the capacity of staff and visibility of its office. Today, NDI provides more sophisticated and targeted consultations on enhancing financial management and reporting capacities as ET works toward monitoring the November 2006 election. NDI's partnership with ET serves as a model for long-term organizational development partnerships, because of its progressive nature as well as the mutual respect and trust that exists.

Since its founding, ET's ability to raise the standard of elections and increase public access to information and government transparency has remarkably expanded. In May, 1996, ET trained approximately 100 volunteers and observed 26 municipalities during the voter registration process. Five years later in the 2001 elections, ET fielded

more than 5,000 volunteer observers and conducted a "quick count" of the election results. ET continues to enjoy credibility as the premier national election observation group and as a Nicaraguan chapter of Transparency International.

As ET has matured, NDI has helped the group develop its institutional knowledge on designing more cutting-edge methodologies for collecting systematic and statistically sound information. In preparation for this year's elections, NDI partnered with ET and a well-respected team of scholars from the Central American University (UCA) to conduct a *Democracy Survey* in an effort to assess the political attitudes of citizens. Among other issues, the survey helped identify and analyze the factors inhibiting youth participation in the political process that could potentially affect some 14 percent of the electorate and therefore significantly influence the outcome of the elections. The survey results helped to determine ET's pre-election activities, including an audit of the national voter registry and an analysis on problems related to the distribution of national identification

cards. Additionally, preparation for the survey facilitated the evaluation of ET's national volunteer network and enabled the group to identify specific geographic areas where ET needs to rebuild its local chapters.

NDI is also working with ET to strengthen its financial management and reporting capacities. In order to help them accurately account for resources from multiple donors. Together, the partners are evaluating the group's organizational challenges, which will serve as a basis for revising ET's written operational procedures and financial management policies. As per standard sub-grant procedures, NDI has required monthly programmatic and financial reports, which are tied to financial draw downs, to provide practice on regular reporting. NDI's Nicaragua staff members, who understand the day-to-day challenges faced by their counterparts, provide regular feedback on the quality and accuracy of the reports before these are officially submitted. As testament to the group's overall capacity and professionalism, NDI and ET hope to reach their mutual benchmark of achieving a perfect organizational and financial audit by the end of the year.

Lessons Learned: Partnership Guidelines to

"The partnership would have been more wholesome if it included more intense one-on-one capacity building for program staff and more institutional support." Kennedy Masime, CGD Executive Director in regard to NDI's APPFT.

No matter how successful a partnership, there is always room to build upon lessons learned. Here are some tried and true guidelines from the Citizen Participation Team's "Review of Partner Relationships with GONG & *Transparencia*."

- ◆ Identify whether a group has the capacity to fulfill NDI's expectations prior to the partnership.
- ◆ Rely on Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) to define roles, responsibilities, objectives and expected outcomes.
- ◆ Start with the end in mind—establish the partner's expectations and make them a priority.
- ◆ Set realistic standards and expectations of partners.
- ◆ Allow partners to make mistakes, learn from challenges and take responsibility for its growth.
- ◆ Use NDI's relationships to help organizations develop networks with political public officials donors and other NGOs.

Partnerships That Take Many Forms in Liberia

Coming off 25 years of civil war and political upheaval, NDI's partners in Liberia form a resilient community of activists who have responded to its chaotic past with organizing and activism. In a recent trip to Washington, DC, Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf remarked, "Liberia will succeed because



NDI Senior Program Officer Thomas Du, center, works with NDI partners during

it has no other option but to succeed." Civil society groups have demonstrated they are essential in the rehabilitation and restructuring process of Liberia's democracy.

NDI's partnerships with Liberian civic groups have many dimensions and go back to when the Institute first started programming in the country in the mid-1990s. Since restarting programming in 2003, partnerships with local groups has been central to NDI's approach. When NDI returned to Liberia after the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in August of 2003, local civic groups were among those first consulted about what role NDI could play in the political transition. NDI held a one-day workshop to explore the role civic groups saw for themselves in Liberia. The groups who took part in this workshop were self-identified advocates, educators and watchdogs. These categorizations then inspired NDI, NED and USAID funded programs to support free and fair elections by assisting local groups with civic and voter education campaigns and domestic election observation initiatives. NDI provided techni-

cal assistance to a range of partners that included mentoring, guided practice, trainings, small grants, study tours to neighboring countries and the use of visiting experts.

The in-country presence of NDI staff including Country Director Sidi M. Diawara and Senior Program Officer Thomas Du meant that there were always experienced NDI personnel available to bounce ideas, provide guidance and to seek support. NDI's partnerships included working together on joint projects such as focus group research and an accountability workshop after one year of the transitional government. These civic groups' activities took many different forms and were personified by three among many different partnerships.

The National Youth Movement for Transparent Elections (NAYMOTE) was a partner in the assessment, focus group research and domestic observation. NDI supported their civic education efforts with small grants and ongoing advice about their materials and programs. When NAYMOTE produced a series of instructional posters in the electoral process, NDI advised its partner on how to simplify the posters' message thereby increasing their effectiveness. Along with its women's political participation campaigns, NAYMOTE conducted Women's Forum, a weekly radio program. Once again, technical assistance from NDI allowed the group to pull together a forum that addressed myths and stereotypes that impede women from participating more fully in the political process. NDI helped the group identify the issues that required discussion as well as how to air these concerns in a socially conscious manner.

Center for Transparency and Accountability in Liberia (CENTAL) works toward building a Liberia with "a clean government working for the benefit of all". CENTAL took part in NDI's accountability events and NDI supported their advocacy efforts as well as provided assistance with the group's strategic planning processes. In 2005, NDI funded a roundtable conference on "Striking the Core: Building Anti-Corruption Initiatives," where 14 civil society groups gathered along with representatives from the Ministry of Justice and other international partners to develop anti-corruption strategies and set a basis for more transparent information sharing.

The **Center for Promotion of Democracy in Liberia (CPD)** and NDI worked closely on the Palaver Hut, a radio program working on civic and voter education topics from April to October 2005. NDI helped CPD synchronize the Palaver Hut's programming with the election cycle. In turn the Palaver Hut host Saylor Wotherson moderated two candidate forums for Senate candidates in Montserrado County that covers the capital Monrovia. These debates were jointly presented by the Press Union of Liberia, NDI and the International Republican Institute (IRI). While NDI's funding of Palaver Hut has for the time being, finished the program still broadcasts weekly on the Radio UNMIL operated by the United Nations Mission in Liberia. NDI and CPD have talked about working



A monitor attends to the polling station. Photo by Jim Della-Giacoma

together again in the future on regular broadcast that will focus on parliamentary issues.

A Building Block Approach to Civic Partnerships in Kazakhstan

By Laura Lockard
Resident Country Director, Kazakhstan

What happens when a “what if” becomes reality? Such is the case with the Kazakhstan-based NGO the Republican Network of Independent Monitors (RNIM). What began as a question of “what if” NDI pulled together many small NGOs to monitor the upcoming elections and developed a respected, national organization that is now an integral part of the Kazakhstan civil society.

RNIM was formed in 1999 on a temporary basis through an NDI subgrant. NDI facilitated the development of RNIM by pulling together a coalition of NGOs dedicated to voter education and encouraging citizen involvement in the 1999 Parliamentary election monitoring process. When RNIM conducted that first grassroots election monitoring mission, it was unprecedented in Kazakhstan. RNIM trained and deployed approximately 2,500 observers to election precincts across the country.

With the continuing support of NDI, RNIM soon expanded its efforts by conducting its first national civic advocacy program aimed at the improvement of local self-governance legislation in 2000. During the campaign more than 90,000 signatures were gathered in a successful effort to block an inadequate law on local self-governance. RNIM has

since conducted civic advocacy campaigns on improvement of mass media, housing and electoral legislation. Today RNIM's mission has advanced to include development of civil society and work toward improvement of the electoral process through legislative outreach activities.

NDI strives to advance RNIM in their organizational capacity building, which includes board development, regular training of staff and regional directors and weekly consultations with management. NDI has also taken a deliberate role in supporting RNIM's strategic financial planning. Supporting RNIM in their endeavors to diversify their funding is important to achieving sustainability and financial independence. NDI does this by facilitating meetings with other international donors and key community leaders. NDI also supports RNIM's proposal writing process, providing consultation on concept development, case statements and writing techniques. NDI has been very successful in helping RNIM to secure outside funding.

When it comes to RNIM's election observation mission planning, NDI serves a chiefly advisory role. NDI contributes by sharing expertise from election missions in other developing democracies with similar circumstances. For example, NDI assists RNIM navigate the pitfalls that can result from inadequate and inconsistent short term observer trainings over such a large geographic area by providing short term observer training support and training of trainers. NDI also serves as a guide through the final report writing phase to be of assistance in adjusting it for a Western oriented audience.

Trust and moral support is a



When it comes to RNIM's election observation mission, NDI plays a strictly advisory role.

critical component to the NDI -RNIM partnership. NDI has the capability to maintain focus on the long term effects of RNIM's efforts during those instances when RNIM suffers an occasional defeat due to the continuing fluctuations in democratic reforms in Kazakhstan. NDI serves as a sounding board and place of support when the partner gets immersed in the immediate issues and loses sight of the important steps they are making.

As an election monitoring apparatus and purveyor of civil society, this NDI -RNIM partner relationship has continuously proved that it is an essential and effective tool in democratic civic development. NDI provides the fundamental concepts and tools of democratization that RNIM can then take to their regional leadership and volunteers.

NDI's support and guidance combined with RNIM's perseverance in this ever changing environment has allowed this partnership to weather the challenges of working in Kazakhstan. What began as a simple idea has gradually developed into a firebrand organization in Kazakhstan. Serving as one of the few unfettered, non-partisan national organizations in the country, RNIM has great potential to serve civil society and democratic development for many years to come.



A Kazakhstani ballot box, its clear walls representing the emphasis on transparent elections.



ABOUT US

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THANK YOU

The Citizen Participation Team would like to thank all the DC and local staff members who provided assistance with compiling this Civic Update.



Part(ner)ing Shot:

Taken at a civic education training in Rumbek, Sudan where NDI partnered with Sudan Radio Service and Mercy Corps. To view more photos and details, log onto the Citizen Participation blog. Photo by Jim Della-Giacoma.

NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE
FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION CD LIBRARY INDEX

The Citizen Participation Team designed the CD-ROM Resource Library primarily to support NDI resident representatives and local staff members. The CD-ROM includes NDI guides, reports, toolkits, and documents from other sources that can be used as a reference tool to support activities that increase the political participation of citizens. It also has collected materials in French, Spanish and Arabic. If you're interested in obtaining the latest copy of the Citizen Participation CD-ROM, or would please send an email request to: civicblogmodera-

Visit the Citizen Participation Blog at
<http://dialogue.ndi.org>

New on the Citizen Participation Team since January 2006 is **Christiane Connors**. Christiane joined the team shortly after finishing a two- year assignment with the Peace Corps in Gabon where she taught English as a foreign language in the public education system and initiated various community-based projects. In the fall, Christiane will enroll at the University of Sussex in Brighton, UK as a Rotary International Ambassadorial Scholar. She will pursue a Masters degree in Anthropology of Development and Social Transformation that she hopes will lead her back to the field focusing on secondary education development. Prior to Peace Corps, Christiane graduated from Georgetown University with a Bachelor of Arts in American Studies.