

“Creating Developmental Partnerships with Local Organizations and Using Subawards to Promote Organizational Development”



The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs

Citizen Participation Team

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PREFACE

The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) often partners with local civic groups to help them develop the capabilities needed to undertake organized political actions, such as civic and voter education efforts, issue advocacy campaigns, political process monitoring initiatives, and community organizing campaigns. In each case, NDI introduces groups to various tools and techniques. NDI recognizes, however, that empowering citizens requires more than encouraging participation or providing tools. It also requires helping citizens master the organizing techniques (e.g., issue identification and analysis, planning, resource management, deliberation, communication, fundraising, and evaluation) and developing the know-how required to take collective action, solve complex problems, and become leaders in their own right. At the same time, NDI assists the development of responsible, accountable, and effective civic organizations.

NDI's Citizen Participation Team provides best practices and other support services to the Institute's civic programs worldwide. The team conducted this study to identify some lessons related to NDI's developmental partnerships with local civic organizations. This report presents findings and offers recommendations intended to help NDI staff members better structure future partnerships and deliver assistance.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To enhance organizational learning and improve program performance, NDI's Citizen Participation team researched the Institute's developmental partnerships with politically active civic organizations and drew conclusions about what makes this particular type of relationship work. The research focused on ways to structure the partnerships, including the use of memorandums of understanding (MOUs) and subawards, and on how best to deliver assistance once partnerships are clearly established. NDI chose to examine a current program in Romania where the Institute has working relationships with eight local partners.

The research team chose the Romania program as a focus for research because a positive mid-program evaluation (see Appendix 1) showed NDI had assisted eight partner groups in planning and implementing successful advocacy campaigns. The groups also conducted election-related actions including candidate forums and get-out-the-vote efforts. The local groups focus on a range of issues, including equality for women, healthcare, and the environment. Each organization existed before NDI began working with it, although none of them had much practical experience with political activism. All of the groups agreed that technical assistance, especially that which focused on political organizing and developing strategic approaches, is how NDI has best supported them. As a result of NDI's assistance and their own initiative, all of the groups succeeded in opening the political process in their respective communities and influencing public officials. They did this in a way that not only allows for their own continued participation, but also in a way that created space for the political participation of other citizens.

Using an *appreciative inquiry* approach, the Citizen Participation team investigated what worked well in the relationships by interviewing leaders and activists from each local group, as well as NDI staff members involved in the Romania program. After examining NDI's relationships with the local organizations, the research team determined that the groups accepted, appreciated, and applied the organizational tools and techniques that NDI introduced for three interrelated reasons:

- The relationship had an "intimate" dimension similar to a friendship.
- A clearly-structured *developmental partnership* existed.
- NDI delivered assistance through a process of *guided practice*.

The team also drew some additional conclusions about partner selection, the ability of groups to advance pre-existing initiatives through political action, and the effectiveness of tying financial support into a comprehensive package of technical assistance.

The Romania Experience

According to NDI's Romania country team, NDI strived to build "intimate" relationships with the local partners through regular communication and discourse. This approach seems to have been successful, since leaders from each group characterized their relationship with NDI as a friendship when interviewed by the research team. To these leaders, friendship meant that NDI responded to their needs and concerns, provided honest advice and thoughtful guidance, held them to a professional standard, allowed them to make their own decisions, but also helped them understand when they made mistakes, and championed them to other organizations and institutions. Trust and openness underscored the relationships.

NDI's partnership with the Romanian organizations can also be characterized as *developmental* in terms of the purpose. Developmental partnerships are built on the understanding that NDI is providing assistance so that the local group is better able to participate politically and carry out its underlying mission. Success is measured by higher levels of activism, performance, professionalism, and independence on the part of the local group; all of which are central to sustainability. The research concluded that having clearly structured developmental partnerships made a difference when it came to ensuring that NDI and the local groups had matching expectations about the partnership and understood each other's respective roles and responsibilities. NDI's Romania team also made it clear that NDI would provide progressive assistance for an extended period of time, so long as the partner organizations continuously worked to improve.

NDI premised its assistance in Romania on the notion that groups can learn best and build sustainable capacities by being actively engaged; actually doing instead of sitting in a training session and being instructed what to do. The majority of NDI interventions involved actually helping the groups take actions, like initiating

"Before NDI, I did not think the mayor would ever care about what I had to say. Now, after working with NDI for over a year, the mayor calls me for advice!"

-Director of ARAS

community mapping projects, planning advocacy campaigns, writing proposals, developing press releases, reviewing internal policies and procedures, and meeting with public officials.

This learning-by-doing process can be characterized as guided practice. In this way, NDI representatives offered guidance to the groups as they developed and put newly acquired ideas, tools, and techniques into practice. The process entailed coaching, providing structured feedback, and facilitating regular reflection exercises. For example, NDI would introduce the groups to the fundamentals of meeting management and then guide them as they organized and ran a meeting.

The research team also concluded that partner selection made a difference when it came to NDI's ability to build intimate relationships with the Romanian groups. NDI's Romania country team identified partners that had track records as doers (although they were not necessarily politically aware or active), rather than groups that only talked a lot about what they should do or would do with funding. The groups also viewed themselves as potential agents of change, which allowed NDI to more easily empower them to play that role and to take political action on self-selected issues relevant to their existing missions. The groups also recognized the value of outside assistance.

As part of the research effort, NDI identified some ways in which sub-awards helped enhance organizational development. Sub-awards are seemingly most effective when they are integrated into a comprehensive approach to building a partner's capacity. Sub-awards can be leveraged to help groups focus on certain organizational deficiencies. For example, sub-awards can be made contingent upon a group working to develop or improve internal financial management policies or procedures with NDI's assistance. Moreover, the organizational benefits of sub-awards can also extend beyond improved financial management and increasing the level of activity; when these expectations are an explicit part of the partnership, sub-awards can also help increase the overall professionalism and performance of groups by establishing a culture of accountability, responsibility and transparency.

“Partners learn best by doing and when they are provided consistent support. As organizations mature, NDI should change the nature of its assistance to meet the needs of the partner.”

Main Conclusions and Recommendations

Partner selection makes a difference

Local partners must desire the assistance and understand its relevance. If the assistance is going to be absorbed and applied in a meaningful way, existing leadership (defined in terms of individuals that can envision a more capable organization in the future and that are willing to take responsibility for achieving the vision) is a must. When groups view themselves as agents of change, NDI can more easily help empower them to play that role. A



Workshop bringing members of partner groups together, allowing them to learn from each other.

potential partner should also have a track record as a doer, not just as a group that talks a lot about what it should do.

- *Trust is an essential component in the relationship.* It can be built through regular, open communication, consistency in NDI's overall approach, projecting a can-do attitude, being understanding about things that did not meet expectations, being responsive, and insisting on a high level of performance (and, conversely, performing at a high level).
- *Roles, responsibilities and expectations need to be made clear.* This should happen early in the relationship and be done collectively in a way that leads to a clearly-defined developmental partnership. As the partnership progresses, NDI needs to remain clear and consistent about its role as a technical assistance provider and about helping the organization become self-sustaining. NDI should encourage longer-term strategic thinking on the part of the organization and help it imagine a time when it will no longer need developmental assistance.
- *Helping existing groups (e.g., service providers) take political action on self-selected issues that are relevant to their mission is an effective means of increasing political participation.* It is much easier to help groups organize and take political action when they already have a stake in a particular issue area.
- *Money is only part of an integrated developmental picture.* Financial support works particularly well when it forms part of a more comprehensive development

package and is complemented by technical assistance. Partners need to understand that NDI is not a donor. NDI provides money with the expectation that it will help groups become more capable not just more active. Financial support is one tool that NDI uses to help partners learn and improve through first-hand experiences.

NDI Romania Local Partners		
Group	Area of Focus	City
ARTI	Youth involvement	Craiova
ADCP	Community Development	Panaghia (a village near Craiova)
ALIAS	Economic Development	Lupeni
ARAS	HIV/AIDS	Constanta
Mare Nostrum	Environment	Constanta
APoWeR	Women and Gender Issues	Timisoara
PDA	Election Monitoring	Bucharest
PDA Brasov	Election Monitoring	Brasov

- *Partners learn best by doing and when they are provided consistent support.* As organizations mature, NDI should change the nature of its assistance to meet the needs of the partner. NDI should also provided comparative information and feedback so that the organization can make informed decisions about what would work best for itself. NDI should not do their work for them. At the same time, NDI should allow a partner organization to make mistakes, as a way to improve its ability to make judgments and learn first-hand what works and what does not.

RESEARCH PROCESS

For this research, the Citizen Participation team interviewed members of NDI's regional teams and discussed the Institute's relationships with local partner organizations, focusing on how the partnerships were formed and structured, if subawards were provided, and the overall success of the local groups. Team members met with NDI's Sub-grants Accounting team to discuss the subaward process and how awards are administered, including the selection of groups, the different types of awards, and the interactions between field office and the Washington office.

The Research team also conducted a field study in Romania. They spent a week traveling with NDI Romania staff member Oana Bahnaru Preda to the offices of each of NDI's eight partners. The team interviewed the organizations' leaders, staff members, volunteers, and also beneficiaries from the local communities. All of the interviews were framed around the same set of questions geared toward learning how and why the groups changed because of their partnership with NDI. During the

interviews, the research team used an Appreciative Inquiry approach that focused discussion on the things that worked best about the partnership and examples of when the groups performed at their best.

Traveling to the offices of local partners allowed the research team to see first hand how the partner groups organized their work. This also allowed the team to witness how dedicated the organizations are to their own development. For example, ARTI had its statutes hanging on the wall to remind everyone how important transparency is and the importance of structure, while Mare Nostrum had an internal SWOT analysis hanging in its board room, and ALIAS also had a SWOT analysis hanging in the mail hallway with a checklist on activities and actions needed to improve the organization.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Since late 2002, NDI has been conducting an advocacy program with eight local groups in select cities throughout Romania. The program objective is to help citizen groups mobilize for political action, secure financial resources, and build strong public profiles and trust in their work. The groups worked on a range of issues, including equality for women, healthcare, and the environment, and they each existed long before NDI began working with them. However, they did not have any previous experience in political activism and, in some cases, did not even realize the possibility of political activism. NDI is the only organization providing developmental assistance to the groups, although they all receive modest financial support from donors.

The research team chose to study Romania because a positive mid-program evaluation showed that NDI had helped the local partners plan and implement successful advocacy efforts. These efforts included election-related activities, such as candidate forums and get-out-the-vote campaigns. As a result of NDI's assistance and their own initiatives, all of the groups succeeded in opening political space in their respective communities and influencing public officials. They have done this in a way that not only allows for their own continued participation, but also the political participation of other citizens.

When discussing the benefits of the NDI partnership, all of the groups pointed first and foremost to the technical assistance they received. They underlined the significance of NDI helping them become better organized and better equipped to take a strategic approach to their work. They also said that the close relationship they each had with NDI was critical, because it made them more open and responsive to NDI's advice and guidance. When the research team asked each group how they metaphorically characterized the relationship with NDI (for example, teacher and

student, parent and child, doctor and patient), they all said the same thing: it was a friendship. They viewed the Institute as supportive, honest, trustworthy, frank, open, and truly caring about their interests and abilities to be successful.

The groups believed that they had developed in significant ways and wanted to become even more capable of advocating and influencing public policy. They were aware of the power they were gaining in their communities and are learning ways to leverage this power to transform political processes. They now understand that NDI can help them gain skills and experience and their friendships with NDI continue to deepen as a result.

After spending a week in Romania examining NDI's relationships with the local organizations, the research team found that the groups accepted, appreciated, and applied the organizational tools and techniques that NDI introduced for three interrelated reasons:

- The relationship had an “intimate” dimension similar to a friendship.
- A clearly-structured *developmental partnership* existed.
- NDI delivered assistance through a process of *guided practice*.

The team also drew some additional conclusions about partner selection, the ability of groups to link political action to their pre-existing initiatives, and the effectiveness of tying financial support into a comprehensive package of technical assistance.

Reason 1: The Relationship had an “intimate” dimension.

The research team concluded that intimate relationships provide the basis for effective developmental partnerships. Intimate means that both NDI and the partner are open, honest, and trust one another. All relationships, person-to-person or institution-to-institution, take time to build and nurture and require a concerted effort to make them strong. As the relationship grows and matures, trust builds and intimacy develops. This helps promote greater understanding between the partners and makes them more responsive to each other. It seems that an intimate, trusting relationship creates a bridge that enables developmental assistance to be delivered.

In Romania, building such relationships required a series of steps that first involved identifying self-motivated groups that could benefit from NDI's assistance and then communicating openly and regularly with the groups to learn about their respective organizations. NDI's Romania team had to gain the trust of the groups and likewise

confirm that the groups could be trusted to undertake new initiatives with NDI assistance. NDI representatives got to know the staff members and volunteers from each group; developed a collective understanding about civic participation and the politics of each community; and determined organizing and activism priorities.

Selecting Partners and Forming Intimate Relationships

NDI's Romania team spent considerable time identifying potential local partners. They began by establishing selection criteria, mapping the civil society sector of select communities, and then reaching out to promising groups. Romanian staff members met with more than fifty organizations during the process. Once NDI representatives established the criteria, they began searching for potential partners by mapping civil society in select communities and interviewing formal and informal community leaders to get leads on potential organizations. NDI staff members continuously inquired about groups that had good reputations and track records of contributing to community welfare.

Once a handful of groups were identified, NDI representatives began meeting the groups. This initial contact was either in the form of a one-on-one meeting between NDI and a group's leadership, or a workshop with multiple groups coming together for an introductory training on organizing and advocacy. No matter the format, the groups discussed their missions, work, and future plans in terms of political participation.

NDI representatives also informed the groups of the NDI program objectives and expectations they had for the potential partners. The representatives underlined the technical assistance and expert guidance that NDI could provide the groups. Financial resources or the possibility of sub-awards were not discussed. This proved to be significant, because it oriented the budding relationships toward capacity building, rather than toward unconditional financial support.

NDI asked groups that were interested in pursuing a partnership to submit a

NDI Romania's Criteria for Partner Groups

- Be established and have a "track record;"
- Already be focused on an issue area;
- Want to change society;
- Want to become more developed and sophisticated and be open to different methods and tools to achieve this;
- Wish to enhance their work by adding a political dimension;
- Be enthusiastic and motivated;
- Have a citizen-centered orientation;
- Have a good understanding of their community and its problems; and
- Be willing to receive NDI assistance.

Types of Questions NDI Romania Asked Potential Partners

- What is the organization's mission statement?
- What are the organization's goals?
- How long has the organization been established?
- How large is the staff and membership?
- Who are the organization's beneficiaries?
- Are there established policies? (i.e. financial, reporting, volunteer management, etc.)?
- What has been the group's experience in political action?
- Why does the leadership want the organization to become politically active?
- What types of activities does the organization engage in?
- What types of relationships does the organization have with community leaders?
- How does the organization see itself in the community?
- What types of activities does the group want to implement in the future?
- How can NDI help achieve the organization's goals?

partnership proposal. Each proposal discussed what the group would contribute to the partnership and what they hoped to gain from it. They were not focused on receiving financial assistance but technical assistance. Each proposal outlined how the group wanted to progress, become more sophisticated, and how NDI might be able to assist it.

NDI met with the groups that submitted proposals to discuss their ideas and how the Institute could help them accomplish specific objectives. The meetings provided additional opportunities for NDI to evaluate the groups and assess whether they would be viable partners.

NDI invited the organizations that had the clearest sense of direction and seemed most willing to work together to form a partnership. It met with the groups that agreed and together outlined agreed upon roles, responsibilities, and expectations in a more formal manner.

Once the partnerships were formed, NDI treated the groups with respect and viewed them as peers. According to the groups, NDI's staff members were open and honest with the groups; they never had a hidden agenda or withheld news or information. They never told the groups what to do but provided information and discussed options. They always listened to the ideas and opinions of group members and if they disagreed, they would discuss why their opinion differed. Also, NDI always respected

the decisions of the groups; the groups had to make their decisions and succeed or fail on their own. If an activity a group implemented was not successful, NDI never had the “I told you so” attitude, but worked with the groups to identify lessons learned.

When a group was successful, NDI shared its story with the other local groups, NDI headquarters in Washington, DC, and other international organizations. The Institute’s Romania staff “championed” the groups to other international organizations by being a reference for projects and inviting the groups’ members to networking events. This public recognition illustrated that NDI Romania supported them, translating into trust.

NDI originally formed partnerships with nine organizations; however one of groups was not progressing. After looking at the reasons why, NDI Romania and the group recognized the leadership challenges the group was experiencing made it unable to undertake new activities or receive assistance. As a result, the developmental partnership was terminated, nevertheless, NDI and the group still have a relationship and the prospect of reviving the developmental partnership is possible.

Reason 2: A Clearly-structured Developmental Partnership Existed.

NDI is not a Donor, it is a Provider of Technical Assistance.

NDI’s partnerships with the Romania organizations can be characterized as *developmental* in terms of the purpose. A developmental partnership is built on the understanding that NDI is providing assistance so that the local group is better able to participate politically and carry out its underlying mission. Success is measured by higher levels of activism, performance, professionalism, and independence on the part of the local group; all of which are central to sustainability. The research concluded that having clearly-structured developmental partnerships made a difference when it came to ensuring that NDI and the local groups had matching expectations about the partnership and understood each other’s respective roles and responsibilities. NDI’s Romania team also made it clear that NDI would provide progressive assistance for an extended period of time, so long as the partner organizations continuously worked to

“We desire to become stronger and better and the assistance NDI provides allows us to. Any organization can provide money, but we become sustainable and successful by receiving expertise and guidance.”

-Member of Mare Nostrum

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improve.

Trust is the underlying foundation for developmental partnerships. As noted earlier, the groups trusted NDI, and were more open to assistance and guidance. As a result, the collaborative process of creating a structured, formalized partnership illustrates that NDI listens to its partners and views them as peers. Conversely, NDI gains trust in its partners when they work to identify their needs and priorities; this illustrates the groups are serious about doing the work right, not just doing the right work.



A well ADCP advocated the local government to build.

When they approached the local groups to discuss the possible partnerships, NDI's Romania staff members did not talk about the possibility of financial resources. As a matter of fact, the groups did not know that there was a possibility of receiving funds until almost six months into the developmental partnership. Instead, the Institute's staff illustrated how assistance could help the groups become more effective.

Structuring Partnership and Creating MOUs

Once NDI and the groups agreed to move ahead, they formalized their developmental partnerships by creating partnership guidelines, which established a structure and defined roles, responsibilities, and expectations, ensuring that both NDI and the partner groups could be held accountable.

The process for developing the partnership guidelines was collaborative, not just NDI telling the groups how the partnerships were to be structured. Giving both partners an equal say in the partnership strengthened the trust that was established during the selection process and showed the local partners that NDI valued their opinions and ideas. Additionally, the local partners' active participation showed their commitment to the partnership and their own organizational development.

While developing the guidelines, NDI and the groups did not discuss specific activities, as a comprehensive needs assessment had not yet taken place. Additionally,

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the NDI Romania staff members and the local groups viewed the partnerships as being progressive, and that assistance and issues targeted for assistance would change over time, so they decided to focus on general terms as opposed to specific details. NDI and each local partner discussed and agreed:

Terms for MOUs

- The partnership would be of limited duration;
- Communication would be open and honest through established channels;
- NDI's assistance would be agreed upon by both sides;
- On a joint decision-making process;
- On the objectives of the partnership and the measurements to evaluate them;
- On the mechanisms to terminate the partnership;
- NDI's role would be an advisory one and the partner would give due consideration to NDI's advice but not be bound to it; and
- Long-term sustainability of the organization would be a joint goal of the partnership with NDI.

Additionally, the discussions about expectations helped to affirm that the partner groups' goals and objectives had a clear political activism orientation. NDI is not well-suited to helping NGOs that are only interested in service provision or social activities, since NDI adds the most value to organizations working on democratic reforms or trying to be otherwise politically engaged.

In most cases, the Citizen Participation team encourages the use of written MOUs as a means of structuring partnerships. NDI's Romania team did not use written MOUs however, since they believed groups may view a formal written document as NDI not trusting them, which – coincidentally – was brought up by APOWER. During the interview, its leaders told the Citizen Participation Team, without being prompted or asked, that not having a formal agreement illustrated NDI's trust. However, NDI Romania and the groups still outlined and created partnership guidelines. In their customary follow-up e-mail, NDI Romania sent the agreed upon terms to the groups, essentially creating a de facto MOU. This gave NDI and the partners a method for enforcing accountability and lessening confusions that may have arisen from a misunderstanding of agreed upon terms.

Reason 3: NDI Delivered Assistance Through a Process of “Guided Practice.”

“I could sit all day in a training session on how to implement an activity, but I will not learn as much as if I sit down and do it with the help of an NDI staff member.” An ARAS staff member made this statement during the interview and it reinforces the understanding that people learn best by doing. Learning by doing builds confidence and, as a result, groups with which NDI uses this approach have a high level of maturity, confidence, and seriousness.

NDI’s overall goal is strengthening the democratic political process of communities, not just the organizational development of select groups. Therefore, if a group is not progressing, NDI and the group should investigate why. There could be multiple reasons, such as wrong needs targeted, the assistance is not specific enough, which NDI and the group could address and solve. However, if the group is not committed to change and community activism, NDI should terminate the partnership; the group will not achieve the partnership and NDI’s objectives of strengthening the political process.

The learning-by-doing process can be characterized as “guided practice.” In this way, NDI representatives offered guidance to the groups as they developed and put newly acquired ideas, tools, and techniques into practice. The process entailed coaching, providing structured feedback, and facilitating regular reflection exercises.

Guided practice has groups learn how to be successful by being successful. It comes from the understanding that active participation and experiential learning are the most powerful ways to teach a new skill. For example, instead of holding a training session on how to write a proposal and then having the partner groups go back to their communities and write one alone, NDI Romania provided the groups information on how to write one, then provided guidance and advice to the groups as they wrote their own. This was an opportunity for the groups to learn why they were including specific information, recognize how different aspects of project development were interrelated, such as accounting and donor relations, and how to further develop and analyze all aspects of the organization, project, and proposal. Throughout the process, NDI answered questions, gave feedback, but, in the end, it was the groups who ultimately made the decisions as to how the final proposals looked.

NDI Romania did not do the groups’ work, such as writing reports, press releases, or proposals. They recognized that doing the groups’ work may help the groups meet deadlines, but while it may help in the short-term, it is detrimental to the groups’ long-term health and welfare in that it undermines the goals of accountability, project planning, and the overall package of technical assistance. This approach not only helped the groups to learn and become better, but it also built and strengthened their

trust in NDI.

Assistance Needs to be Directly Related to the Recognized and Acknowledged Needs of the Organization

When developing the program with the organizations, NDI Romania started with the end in mind. NDI staff members discussed with and listened to each organization on where it wanted to be or what it wanted to accomplish, such as legislation being passed or



APOWER advocates for local issues.

increased budget allotments, and created an assistance program to help take the groups to that destination. NDI assistance was purposeful (goal-oriented) and practical (meeting the real and recognized needs of the groups).

NDI and each organization identified the local partner's needs, such as the need for strategic analysis or how to develop an advocacy campaign plan. Once identified, NDI and each group worked together to tailor a targeted and comprehensive assistance program, including consultations, coaching, sharing ideas, and brainstorming. Financial assistance was included; however it was strategically used for program implementation. NDI also held the groups to international accounting standards, allowing the groups to learn to be more transparent, accountable, and why these characteristics were desirable. NDI Romania kept in mind that needs could be accomplished together.

The leaders of the local groups made their own decisions, resulting in the occasional mistake. NDI Romania staff viewed themselves as consultants to the groups and providers of advice and assistance; they did not dictate to the groups what to do and what advice to follow. They also knew that people often learn more from making mistakes than from doing what they are told without thinking for themselves.

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Therefore, when the groups made these mistakes, the Romania staff members were there to offer advice and guidance and to help the groups reflect on the missteps, as a means of learning and developing each organization's ability to constantly assess and improve.

Assistance in Romania was targeted to specific individuals in the organization. For example, when groups were working on a press release, NDI did not hold training sessions for the entire organization, but only for the one or two individuals who were responsible for working with media. This was the same for creating structures and specific policies, such as accounting procedures. By targeting specific individuals, NDI's assistance was more in-depth and often took the form of "on-the-job" training, which was beneficial to the groups as they did not have to stop operations for a day to have the entire office attend a workshop most of the staff did not need.



ARTI's statutes hanging in its office.

The relationships between NDI and local groups were progressive. As the groups matured and became more sophisticated, the assistance was adapted accordingly to meet the new needs of the groups. Groups "graduated" to higher level skills and activities. Over time, the groups started to identify their needs and asked NDI for specific assistance, as opposed to NDI being the driving force. For example, when first working with one of the groups, NDI helped it develop an organizational structure, including job descriptions. As the group matured, its leadership asked NDI to help develop human resource policies.

NDI Romania has developed a newsletter (see Appendix 2) highlighting the partner groups achievements. The groups are also brought together every few months for specific workshops addressing common needs. These gatherings are also an opportunity for the groups to share their stories and learn from each other. The groups have formed an informal network and have even collaborated on projects.

After developing projects and proposals with NDI's assistance through guided

practice, all of the partners received subawards to assist in implementing their advocacy campaigns. For some of the partners, the awards represented a significant percent of their overall budget, while for others it was a smaller percentage. However, no matter the contribution the award made to their overall budgets, all of the partners agreed that financial assistance did help, but it was not the focus of the relationship with NDI.

All of the groups in Romania agreed the comprehensive technical assistance of consultations, workshops, brainstorming sessions, and overall support was what was beneficial about the partnership and that they would not be as successful as they are if they just received financial support. The real value of the subawards they received was the ability to put into practice what they learned through technical assistance. They were able to conduct activities and implement their campaigns while practicing the values of accountability and transparency. After doing this, they understood the impact they have on their communities and have become better organizations. They have also gained public trust by being transparent, accountable, and practicing what they preach. Assistance and consultations provide that insight, not just money.

The groups have become more sophisticated and NDI is working with them to establish and strengthen their relationships with community leaders, local, national, and international organizations, and citizens. This outreach is helping the groups become sustainable by creating opportunities for funding and building their reputations as trustworthy and accountable groups. NDI has also been championing the groups in the international community, helping them to establish a good reputation which will be beneficial for future funding. Groups have also seen an increase in the number of people volunteering to work for them since partnering with NDI.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

After explaining the Romania program and the additional information obtained from NDI program and accounting staff members, the research team has come up with the following conclusions and recommendations. They include general, overarching principles, followed by suggested practices that correspond to building intimate relationships, establishing developmental partnerships, and using guided practice.

Partnership Principles

- Leadership is an essential “raw material.” When an organization already has leaders with ideas about what they want the organization to do or to be, it makes it easier for NDI to provide targeted technical assistance. It is nearly impossible to ensure the sustained growth of an organization that does not have some pre-existing leadership “raw material.”
- Assistance needs to be based on an understanding of what the organization wants to change. NDI assistance is purposeful (goal-oriented) and practical (meeting the real and recognized needs of the group), and is defined together with a partner.
- Local partners must be willing to invest in long-term growth and sustainability. This investment manifests itself in groups thinking strategically and then purposefully pursuing steps to bring about changes in their organizations and communities.
- Partnerships need to be clearly structured. Both partners need to have the same understanding about roles, responsibilities, and expectations.
- Technical assistance must evolve over the life of a developmental partnership. As the organization matures, NDI changes the nature of its assistance; it typically becomes more targeted and sophisticated to the point where the local partner no longer requires help. If steady progress is not being made by a group, however, NDI must be willing to reassess whether its assistance is appropriate and if the organization is really committed to improvement and sustainability.
- Financial assistance needs to be treated as a development tool. Sub-grants – combined with guided practice — are tools that help local partners improve their ability to run programs, interact with funders, report programmatic results and manage money, to name a few capacity areas. Sub-grants can also provide funding for core expenses, such as rent and utilities, allowing the local partner to better concentrate on programs and building capacity for a specified time period.
- Local partner organizations are not NDI instruments. Typically, NDI’s job is to help local partners do their work better. Local partners have their own mission and vision, which should not be subsumed by NDI’s priorities, or those of donors.

Partnership Practices

Building Intimate Relationships

- Communicate regularly to build trust. Trust is not automatically granted. NDI and its partner groups need to gain each others' trust if they want the partnership to be successful.
- Select local partners that are doers. Partners should have a record of taking action in their community, or at least a very strong desire to bring about change.
- Be honest and open with partners. Do not lie or hide the truth. Since NDI demands this from them, it has an obligation to act the same. There is nothing that will destroy a trusting relationship faster than dishonesty.
- Treat the partner group with respect. Partners are not subordinates. Not only do they deserve respect, but people do not respond well when they are not treated fairly or appreciatively.
- Listen to partners and learn about their organization. Find out where they want to their organization to go and what they want to accomplish. This shows that you respect their views and aspirations. Additionally, it shows that you understand that it is their organization, not NDI's.
- Do not make decisions for partners. They need to learn decision-making and to take ownership of their decisions. At the same time, help the groups develop decision-making skills and procedures.
- Stand by your partners. If groups are not as successful as anticipated, provide support. Use it as a structured learning opportunity by helping them reflect on lessons and make improvements.
- Have an open door policy. Be willing to work with the group all the time, not just when it's convenient for NDI and NDI's staff. Keep your doors open and take their calls, respond their e-mails in a timely manner, and reply to their sms messages.
- Emphasize NDI's technical expertise. When approaching potential partners, NDI staff members should build the value of the overall technical assistance, not just the financial resources. If possible, grants should not even be discussed during the initial conversations. Stress that NDI is not a donor.

Establishing Developmental Partnerships

- Clearly explain NDI's purpose. During the beginning discussions, help the group understand why NDI wants to offer assistance and what NDI hopes to gain.
- Facilitate strategic thinking. Hold a strategy session with the groups to find out what they want to accomplish, how they can effect the political situation, and how they want their organization to look after working with NDI. This will help define what type of assistance is needed and how NDI can help the groups.
- Structure the partnership using an MOU. An MOU will reflect the partnership objectives, along with a delineation of roles, responsibilities and expectations.
- Help the groups assess needs and establish developmental priorities.
- Use the MOU as a basis for a periodic review of the partnership.

Using Guided Practice

- Do not do the work for the group. This does not teach them anything or allow them to gain skills. It only creates dependency on NDI and its staff members. Instead, provide advice, such as how to write a report, edit reports, and provide constructive feedback instead of writing it.
- Provide comparative information and feedback. Constant constructive feedback is important so that the organization can make informed decisions about what will work best for it. However, do not tell them what decision to make. Be supportive and confident in their decision making abilities.
- Allow the partner to make some mistakes, rather than forcing them to always take NDI's recommended course of action. This helps groups improve their judgment and learn first-hand what works and what does not. When mistakes happen, work with them to analyze why and how they can change their behavior in the future so as not to make the same mistake twice.
- Use a targeted approach. Have specific one-on-one sessions with staff members who need to build specific skills. For example, work with the Accounting Team, not the entire organization, on how to use new financial software.
- Provide background and perspective. Explain why it is important for groups to behave and implement activities in certain ways. For example, do not just tell the

group that it has to have certain accounting practices because NDI requires them, rather help them understand that transparent accounting and internal controls are important in promoting accountability and public trust in an organization.

- Periodically check progress with the partner. If steady progress is not being made by a group, reassess whether NDI's assistance is appropriate and if the organization is really committed to improvement and sustainability.
- Use NDI's position and relationships to help the organization develop networks with political leaders. NDI develops many relationships with political and international actors in any given country. Give partners the benefits of this information and networking to help them grow and establish their identity and credibility. However, be careful not to compromise their independence and integrity. Consult them and use your own political judgment about what will work best.

APPENDIX 1

Evaluation of NDI civic partners and their needs for future assistance

National Democratic Institute, Romania, 2005

Background

Over a period of three years, NDI's civic program in Romania had as its main objective to increase the capacity of CSOs to advocate for reform and monitor elected officials. NDI identified eight civic organizations it then assisted throughout the program with their advocacy related efforts. The organizations are:

- Association for Community Development – Panaghia (ADCP), Dolj judet
- Romanian Association of Youth with Initiative (ARTI) – Craiova, jud. Dolj
- Association for Promotion of Women in Romania (APFR) – Timisoara
- Anti-AIDS Romanian Association (ARAS) – Constanta
- Mare Nostrum – Constanta
- Vox Deltae – Crisan, jud. Tulcea
- Foundation for Economic Development through Education and Partnership (DEEP) – Lupeni, jud. Hunedoara
- Kolping – Brasov

NDI's assistance took the form of training, individual consultations, and funding. Successes of these organizations and the impact of their activities have been regularly reported to USAID.

In order to channel its assistance effort further and to fine tune its cooperation with each of the organizations it partners with, NDI has recently conducted an in house evaluation of the eight organizations, and of the activities they conducted with support from NDI.

The evaluation focused on three aspects:

- *experience gathered* by the eight organizations in implementing programs targeting local administration and potential and resources for future similar programs
- *overall organizational development* of each of the eight organizations over the last three years
- *capacity of each organization to carry out advocacy campaigns*

Evaluation methodology

1. Experience in implementing programs targeting local administration

This part of the evaluation has taken into consideration, yet not focused on, the results or impact of *individual* programs, as these have been systematically assessed throughout the three year programming, together with each of the organization. Instead, the evaluation focused on obstacles met in implementing this type of programs, solutions used to overcome them and existing resources, both within and outside the group, which could be used in similar programs. To assess all this, NDI conducted a two-day evaluation workshop with the eight partner organizations.

2. Overall organizational development

For the second part of the evaluation, the evaluators conducted individual discussions with the partner organizations, and with the program team. To assess the overall development of NDI's civic partners, a set of comprehensive indicators has been developed, with relevance to all aspects of organizational development (see attached). To capture the evolution over the three years of NDI programming, each organization has been evaluated against each indicator at two moments: 1) the initial moment when the organization joined the program, and 2) January 2005. In order to allow for cross-organization comparison, indicators have been described using closed determinations (no, yes, somewhat). For its training and programming purposes, NDI keeps a more qualitative and descriptive evaluation of each of its civic partners on file.

3. Capacity and willingness to carry out advocacy campaigns

The same procedure has been used to evaluate both the capacity and willingness to conduct advocacy efforts of the organizations. In order to visualize the progress over the three years, ratings have been quantified, as indicated in each of the graphs attached. The average for each indicator has also been calculated, to allow for a quick understanding of the evolution of the respective skill over time.

Results of the evaluation:

1. Experience in implementing programs targeting local administration

Over the last three years, six out of the eight organizations implemented programs aimed at facilitating a better relation between citizens and local administration. The programs included activities like town hall meetings, advocacy campaigns around a local or national issue, education of local officials on problems of local importance, lobby etc. The main obstacles in implementing this type of programs have been:

- Lack of trust of local administration in NGOs
- Lack of interest in communicating with citizens
- Lack of transparency of local administration
- Passive and conservative attitude of local officials
- Poor knowledge of legal environment of local officials
- Corruption of local officials
- Citizens' lack of trust in their power to control the activity of the local administration

On the other hand, this type of programming is facilitated by:

- Legal frame that provides for citizens' input to the local decision making process
- Previous successes in similar programs
- The new local officials, more willing to initiate a dialog with citizens
- The interest of mass media

The six organizations have had moderate successes in their programs. One organization (ARAS) managed to actually solve a local problem, while the other five have made good progress, yet need to continue/improve their local campaign. As a result of their programming, all six organizations have created a solid, professional relation with the local officials, and have built a reputation in the community. Their members and activists have gained experience in working with both local administration and citizens, and became familiar with the legal frame regulating the work of local administration.

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To improve their future programs targeted at the local administration, NDI civic partners should:

- better assess local needs and identify local priorities, by systematically communicating with citizens
- be more perseverant in pushing for a solution to a local problem
- develop a coherent strategy of working with the local administration
- regard local administration as a potential partner, rather than a permanent enemy
- cooperate more with each other
- learn from the successes of other organizations in similar programs
- encourage local officials to receive proper training both on the skills needed to fulfill their responsibilities, and on the legal frame related to the local administration

Overall organizational evolution

The thrust of the NDI civic program has been to help its civic partners develop the skills needed to efficiently implement programs targeted at local administration and other decision factors. However, throughout the program NDI took interest in the overall development of its civic partners, rendering its assistance in various areas of organizational development. There has been only one exception to this, Kolping, a religious organization that falls out of the pattern of civic partners for NDI. As such, NDI's assistance to Kolping has focused exclusively on the electoral program the organization implemented, and has not included the overall development of the organization. The evaluation of each of the eight organizations is detailed in the table attached, and summarized below.

A. Project implementation

As of January 2005, the eight organizations have implemented at least one program supported and assisted by NDI. This offered all organizations the opportunity to gain experience in implementing programs, a fact of major importance for new organizations such as ARTI or ADCP. The support NDI offered to projects related to the 2004 elections has allowed all eight organizations to contribute to a process of major importance to the society – elections – and to better connect with their constituents. Out of the eight organizations, only one – APFR – had conducted

election related activities previous to 2004 elections.

In what regards programs targeted at local administration, seven of the eight organizations are now conducting a dialog with the administration, as opposed to none three years ago. Five organizations have followed a local problem through, and have lobbied the local administration to solve the problem.

B. Internal mechanisms and procedures

NDI works with organizations that are committed to promoting and maintaining their internal democracy, and assists them in opening up their structure and internal mechanisms. Six out of the eight organizations have developed or maintained a genuine internal democracy and inclusive internal processes (exceptions are Vox Deltae and DEEP). However, ADCP, ARTI, Vox Deltae and DEEP still have a decision making process that, even if open and transparent, is not entirely institutionalized and retains an ad-hoc character. For seven out of the eight organizations many of the internal procedures are ad-hoc and informal, which at times leads to confusion and unnecessary delays (the exception is Mare Nostrum) . NDI has not offered any assistance in this area so far, yet, as it proves to be a problematic one, it plans to do so in the near future.

C. PR

All eight organizations have a good approach to PR, and have developed solid and professional relations with both the stakeholders and the environment. ADCP, ARTI and Mare Nostrum have improved their approach during the last two years, while the others had already had good PR at the time of joining NDI program. Throughout the three years, NDI has offered individual consultations on building external relations to all organizations involved in the program.

D. Fund raising

Still a problematic area, even if three (APFR, ARAS, Mare Nostrum) of the seven organizations have overcome the funding insecurity. All organizations have at least one person trained in raising funds, yet their budgeting and fund raising process still needs improvements. NDI has offered occasional advice and assistance in improving the fund raising of each of its partners, and will continue to do so.

E. Strategic planning and evaluation

None of the eight organizations has a serious, longer term strategy, even if three (APFR, ARAS, Mare Nostrum) of them have an annual working plan. NDI has not

offered any assistance or training on this subject, but it will include it in its future training agenda.

F. Members and volunteers

With one exception, the organizations have clear membership procedures, and make a conscious effort to train their members. However, increasing the membership base is neither a priority, nor a strategic goal of the organizations. NDI has offered training and assistance on volunteer management, but has not focused on membership. This subject will be included in the training and assistance agenda in the future.

G. Brief description of current stage of organizational development of each organization

ADCP is a real community organization, active in the village of Panaghia, Dolj judet. The organization is two years old, yet it already implemented a very good election program and a program aimed at facilitating the dialog between local administration and citizens. With a small membership, the organization lacks internal procedures and mechanisms, and its leaders lack skills in organizational management, yet it gained a good reputation in the community, and it managed to involve many of the villagers in both of its programs. During 2005, NDI will assist the organization in implementing more programs and activities aimed at facilitating the dialog between citizens and local administration, by providing the organization with advice and expertise when needed and training its activists on conducting advocacy campaigns. At the same time, the Institute will train ADCP members and activists and assist them in expanding the membership base, institutionalize decision making and programming processes, improve the fund raising and, eventually, develop a two year long strategy of the organization.

APFR Timis is one of the most developed of the NDI's partners. The organization has a solid membership, clear and democratic internal procedures and mechanisms, annual workplans and regular evaluation procedures. It develops solid programs, and has a very good reputation not only in the community, but in the NGO sector in general. However, the organization still lacks a professional strategic planning process and its activists need more training on advocacy.

ARTI Craiova is a two year old organization, yet it is extremely dynamic and efficient (its members are young people aged 16-25). The organization implemented an excellent election program, yet it proved shy in launching a real program to lobby the local administration on a solution to a local problem. The organization has a solid membership and does great at raising funds from local sources, yet it still lacks a serious strategic planning process and clear internal procedures and mechanisms. Its

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activists also need training in budgeting and raising funds on a long term.

ARAS Constanta is a nine year old organization, part of the national ARAS. It develops efficient and well thought of programs and is known both by the community, local and national decision making factors and within the NGO sector. The Constanta branch developed good election and local administration program, yet it faces a change in its leadership and activists which requires NDI's close assistance. The activists need training on advocacy, as well as organizational development, namely strategic planning, evaluation, internal mechanisms and fund raising.

Mare Nostrum Constanta is a twelve year old organization, famous with the decision factors in the environment, within the community and the NGO sector. The organization implements very good programs, and is very active in advocating for environmental issues in the judet. The leadership of the organization has recently changed, thus the organization needs NDI's assistance in advocacy, strategic planning, fund raising and evaluation. The organization has recently taken on a difficult advocacy campaign on a local environment problem, and it needs close assistance with this as well.

Vox Deltae Crisan is a local organization with a great potential in the community, and probably the only one of its kind in the Danube Delta. The organization is 7 years old, and it still in an incipient organizational stage, lacking membership, procedures, programming processes and so on. The organization progressed very little not only in the three years of NDI assistance, but in its seven years of existence. As such, NDI decided to restrict its assistance to the organization to its participation in general trainings, without individual consultations or assistance on organizational issues.

Kolping is an international organization based on religion, aiming at assisting and aiding its members. It is an atypical organization for NDI's partners, yet it proved a serious and efficient partner in the election program. The organization intends to implement some programs targeting local administration. To the extent that this intention materializes into programming, NDI will assist the organization in designing and implement the activities. Yet, as Kolping is a very particular type of organization, NDI will not offer its assistance on issues of organizational development of the organization.

DEEP is a six year old organization, active in Valea Jiului, one of the poorest areas of the country. The organization implemented good election and local administration programs, yet it lacks internal democracy and is now facing a serious crisis due to this. NDI paused its assistance to the organization until the crisis is solved, while offering

advices on conflict resolution and crisis management to the organization's activists.

Capacity and willingness to carry out advocacy campaigns

Using the results of the first two parts of the evaluation, NDI has decided to exclude Vox Deltae from its program. As evaluation proved, throughout the three years, despite assistance, training and consultations, the organization has progressed very little, both in what regards the efficiency of its programs and its organizational life. At the same time DEEP, a good organization and reliable partner, is experiencing a series of unexpected internal crisis, which temporarily block the activity of the organization and its participation in the program. As such, the last part of the evaluation included only five organizations – ARAS, APFR, ADCP, ARTI and Mare Nostrum.

Compared to the moment when they entered NDI program, each organization has progressed in at least five out of the fourteen aspects defining its advocating capacity and activity. The first, most obvious observation is that all five organizations were having almost no experience in or willingness to carry out advocacy campaigns when they joined NDI program. So even if in absolute terms they are still far from perfect in conducting advocacy efforts now, the progress they made is obvious and their results are impressive – which is what NDI program was aiming for.

a. Willingness to advocate

Initially, only two organizations were seeking to organize an advocacy campaign – ARAS and APFR. Now all five current partners of NDI are seeking to or have already done so. The willingness to undertake advocacy efforts is also shown by the improvement in outreach of these organizations: all organizations now outreach to local government, political parties and MPs. The analysis of the programs implemented in 2004 by the organizations showed that all five organizations have developed solid relations with the local administration, with local branches of political parties and, to a less extent, with the MPs. Moreover, these are not always friendly or indifferent relations, at times the organizations strongly oppose the local administration on certain issues (the best example is ADCP, a community organization that forces the local administration to do its work in a transparent and inclusive manner).

b. Capacity to advocate

The evaluation has shown that, while definitely improved, the organizations' approach to advocacy could and should be more systematic and organized. The organizations need to involve beneficiaries in identifying the issues, and to develop a more solid

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and organized campaign plan for their advocacy efforts. Throughout 2004, NDI has closely assisted the organizations, regularly designing and revising their advocacy campaign plans with them. Yet, this is an effort that the organizations need to start making on their own, with less and less assistance from NDI. Lately, NDI has started working with the organizations on ways to involve beneficiaries in identifying the issue, an aspect it intends to stress throughout 2005.

Another important aspect that needs better development – an aspect generally ignored by NGOs when undertaking advocacy efforts – is the research/analysis of the issue. NDI has also started assisting its civic partners in understanding the importance of and undertaking this step in creating a solid advocacy campaign.

c. Relation with beneficiaries

While improved, this relation still needs further improvement. Organizations are now reaching out to their beneficiaries more, yet this is still done on an ad-hoc basis. Organizations need to institutionalize their outreach to and relation with beneficiaries, involving them more in advocacy efforts. They also need to use their campaigns to expand and strengthen their membership base. It is worth noting that this is a problem not only for the five organizations NDI works with, but for most NGOs in Romania, thus even more difficult to overcome.

Conclusions and recommendations:

NDI will use the results of this evaluation exercise to improve its civic program design for the next two years. One of the most important conclusions was that not all civic partners were able or willing to use effectively the resources NDI provided. Therefore, groups like Vox Deltae will no longer benefit from NDI direct assistance in the future. However, Vox Deltae will remain part of the NGO network and will be included in any training seminar NDI will organize for the rest of the group.

As for all the other NGOs that will benefit from NDI assistance in the future, the evaluation helped the civic team identify the main areas to focus attention to.

First, more effort needs to be put in the area of organizational development. Very often the civic partners were not in the position to effectively lobby the local and central government due to lack of resources or internal procedures to better manage the existing resources. The discussions during the Sinaia seminar, in addition to the civic team own assessment, lead to identifying a number of areas where the civic partners need to build more skills and where NDI could help through more formal

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training seminars. These are areas like:

Organizational management

Strategic planning

Fundraising

Printed materials design

The assistance to each organization is tailored on the individual needs, as described in the results of the evaluation. The civic team designed a training calendar for 2005 to accommodate the training needs listed above.

Second, NDI will continue to assist its NGO partners' advocacy efforts and will seek to increase their impact in the communities. Most NGOs NDI works with show a medium level of professionalism in their advocacy work. Continuous assistance, tailored on the specific needs of each NGO, is required in order to improve the situation. NDI will provide this assistance in addition to actively looking for sources for funding for its partners. NDI concluded that the most spectacular results in the field of advocacy, as well as in other fields, were shown when a small amount of money was available for small grants to fund local campaigns. Therefore, NDI will look for opportunities for additional funding as well as ways to adjust its current budget to allow for more funds to go directly to NGO activity.

Third, NDI will facilitate a permanent dialog and exchange of experience among its partners, through conducting general meetings and trainings, and making success stories public through a newsletter and other publications/materials.

APPENDIX 2

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A translated version of NDI Romania's newsletter "The Civic Bulletin."



FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

The civic bulletin is a non-periodical publication. It is edited by NDI with the purpose of informing its civic partners and for a better communication among them. The civic bulletin will be edited every time we will have enough information from you. So, if you like this idea, tell us what you have been up to and we will tell others within our little network.

from Aaron și Dave

NDI's Washington, DC-based Citizen Participation team recently met with eight local partner groups throughout Romania to discuss their programs and relationships with the Institute. The team found that each of the groups has implemented advocacy efforts and, as a result of NDI assistance and their own initiatives, they all have succeeded in opening the political process in their respective communities and influencing public officials. They have done this in a way that not only allows for their own continued participation, but also the participation of other citizens in political processes. The bottom line is that they all have had a transformative affect on community politics and have improved their public profile at the same time. The groups seem to realize the power they are gaining in their communities and are learning ways to leverage that power to open up the political process. They also seem to appreciate NDI's advice and guidance.

The Citizen Participation team members found each of the groups impressive and were also pleased to find such a strong partnership between them and NDI. There is no doubt that NDI can learn a great deal from its experience in Romania

~ APOWER - SMALL STEPS FOR IMPROVING THE LEGISLATION ~

APOWER is at the beginning of a campaign having as a goal the introduction of the restraining order in the legislation regarding domestic violence. The first steps taken by APFR to this day are the following:

- a research upon the way in which domestic violence is approached in the legislation of different other countries
- the setting up of a lobby group having as members politicians and various personalities which are going to support the campaign
- the elaboration of a bill providing for restraining orders

A bigger step has also happened: a meeting with the Minister of Justice who favorably received the proposed amendment. The biggest step is going to be taken: as a matter of fact the campaign for convincing the MPs to adopt the bills.

~ NEARLY OVER ~

The project of the Community Development Association in Panaghia (CDAP) that you've already know so well, yes, yes, that one "regarding the wells", is drawing to an end. The four wells have been blessed properly by the community priest; the people have been pleased and have realized that they shouldn't necessarily wait for the City Hall to solve their problems. The sub-prefect and a county councilor have also participated at the consecration service, but the village mayor hasn't assisted.



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Some time ago, Mare Nostrum transmitted a request of information of public interest to the Constanța Local Council. The requested information regarded the methods used to transfer the Tăbăcăriei Park land on which the Mall is going to be built from public to private property.

Not having received the requested information, Mare Nostrum has brought the Local Council to justice and it HAS WON! Congratulations to Mare Nostrum team, especially for having shown us that the citizen can win in the fight with the authorities (and you should think what kind of authorities!)

~ ARAS CONSTANȚA IS TELLING US THE STORY ~

The ARAS team is also making progresses regarding their ongoing project. ARAS has succeeded to meet the President of the Legal Committee of the Local Council, whom they've convinced to take into account the establishment of working rules and procedures for the Committee which is supposed to evaluate and decide the NGO's project financing from public money. These days the ARAS team is preparing a petition for asking the Local Council to discuss this subject at its next meeting and is trying to fix an appointment with decision makers and NGOs from Constanța.

Beyond this project, it is worth mentioning another success of ARAS, even if it belongs to a field of activity completely different from what we are doing together:

ARAS team succeeded in fundraising from the private sector in order to send 20 people- HIV infected children and their companions - on a camp for one week. Congratulations!

~ MARE NOSTRUM IS TELLING US THE STORY ~

Because Mare Nostrum was confronted with construction cases so many times, it has decided to go beyond the several individual cases which it can face, and to attack the essential problem: the legislation.

For the moment, the plans are at the beginning. The first step consisted in the mobilization of several organizations and setting up a coalition: The National Coalition for Saving the Parks and the Green Urban Areas.

~ ABOUT MARE NOSTRUM AGAIN ~

On another level, maybe more attractive, however very popular, it is worth mentioning another project of Mare Nostrum: „The Preservation of the Dolphins from the Romanian Coast through Involving the Fishermen Community and Raising Awareness of the Tourists.“

The purposes of the project are:

- supporting the fishermen communities in the actions of preservations of dolphins from the Romanian coast;
 - updating the information regarding the beached dolphins and the causes of these accidents as well as information on the migration of the dolphins;
 - informing and raising awareness of tourists and natives from the cost area regarding the importance of the dolphin for the Black Sea.
-

~ ARTI IS TELLING US THE STORY ~

“We’ve finalized a national programme of trainings on public discourse with ARDOR (The Romanian Association for Debate, Oratory and Rhetoric), and now we organize the second edition of the National Festival of Light Music for Children and Teenagers “The Little Artist”. Together with the network of Local Councils of Children and Youth from Romania and the volunteer centers network, we want to finalize a national program for assisting the victims of the natural calamities, consisting in finding volunteer human resources for the rehabilitation of some areas affected by the floods.

At the Council for the Transparency of the Local Public Administration and at the Citizens Committee, everything goes quite smoothly”.

~ KOPLING SEMINARS FOR INFORMATION MULTIPLIERS ~

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As part of the project “Informing the citizens from rural regions regarding the free access to public information and the decisional transparency in public administration” (financed by the World Bank), the training seminars for the information multipliers have taken place in Braşov, Blaj and Timişoara.

The goal of the project is increasing the transparency of the local public institutions and, implicitly, the strengthening of democracy by informing the citizens from the rural regions and small towns regarding the Laws 544/2001 and 52/2003. Forty-five young people willing to become information multipliers through the informative caravans organised in 18 small towns and villages from Braşov, Alba and Timiş counties during September and October 2005, have participated at the seminars.

Within the framework of the caravans, informative materials on Laws 544/2001 and 52/2003 and Local Public Administration institutions will be distributed and debates involving people from the localities targeted in the project will be carried out.



During these seminars, the approached themes were: the description of the role and attributions of the local public institutions, the presentation of local budget's importance for the community development, the content of the Law 544/2001 regarding the citizens access to public information and the content of Law 52/2003 regarding decisional transparency in public administration.

~ STANDING ON THEIR OWN FEET ~

After more than one year of unceasing work, CDAP succeeded in coming to its own feet and obtained financing for a new project from the USA Embassy in Romania.

The objective of the project is making the work of local public administration from Calopăr village more efficient and it implies the organising of training sessions for the Local Councillors of the village and the setting up of some citizens' consultative committees which are supposed to work by the side of the Local Council Committees.

Congratulations for this important step in the life of the organization and good luck in developing the project!

~ SLOW BUT SURE THE FIRST PROJECT OF ALIAS IS PROGRESING TOO ~

The Association for Development ALIAS from Lupeni started a local project that aims to improve communication between citizens and local public administration from Lupeni as well as monitoring the way in which legislation regarding the free access to public interest information is applied.

Laurențiu, the director of ALIAS, has told us what they've done so far:

- setting up the project team which is based on the „Democracy for Community” informal group - constituted during a former project
- 1. informing the local authorities about the project
- 2. contacting the branches of political parties with representatives in Parliament from Hunedoara county
- o elaboration of the monitoring instruments
- o contacting the homeowners' associations which are going to be involved in the project

1. monitoring the meetings of the Local Council
2. filling out the questionnaires for applying the Laws 544 and 52 by the Town Clerk (Secretary) of the Lupeni City Hall
3. sending several letters with information requests regarding the up to now activity of the members of the Parliament from Hunedoara county

appreciation

~ OTHERS ARE ALSO BENEFITING FROM APOWER EXPERIENCE ~

After the project of monitoring the public institutions that was so succesful in Timișoara, APFR has become resource organization for organizations from other countries.

The Euroregional Center for Democracy has invited APFR to talk about the project of monitoring public institutions at a Conference in Chișinău where NGOs from Moldova and Ucraina are taking part.

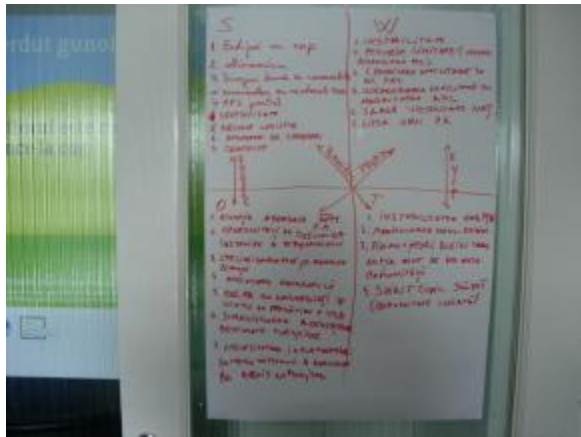
~ FROM THE MOST POPULAR NGO EVENT ~

The Training Program

Although it happened long time ago, namely at the NGOs' National Forum, it is still worth saying that:

- APFR was mentioned by Mona Muscă, still Minister of Culture at that time, among the organizations which had a major contibution to the improving of the legislation
- Mare Nostrum was designated by Laszlo Potozky, the President of the Romanian Donors Forum, one of the organizers of local campaigns with a great impact.

We, at NDI, are happy as often as the trainings that we organize for you have also results in the life of your organizations. Thereby, we were happy



when Cristina told us that ARTI team has conceived and adopted the Interior Order Regulations and the Organizing and Working Regulations. Another idea which has been undertaken by ARTI from the seminar on organizational development is the dissociation between the executive and decisional levels. Thus, ARTI has a new Board and an executive team,

completely separated. As well, we were glad when we have seen the SWOT analysis posted on the wall at the Mare Nostrum office or when we have found out that ALIAS team is thinking about strategic planning.

The seminar on „Advocacy“ has also taken place. From the questionnaires that you filled out, we have understood that you found the discussions interesting and you would apply many of the approached techniques. As you have already known, the goal of the NDI program is to help your organizations in order to have a serious role in the political processes from the communities you are working in. Therefore, we have also considered, the seminar on „Advocacy“, a major item of the training programme as we would like it to help you in improving the work that you have already done with success and because we should be able to develop your individual projects by adapting the discussed instruments at the reality of your organizations, after we had clarified the general issues related to advocacy.

Other useful information

~ PHARE FOR THE CIVIL SOCIETY~

The Delegation of the European Commission in Romania and the Romanian Government have launched three Calls for Proposals under the European Union's Phare Fund for Civil Society from Romania. The three components under which projects proposals can be submitted are:

1. **NGO Sector Development**, with the following domains:
 - o Public information /education campaigns (local, regional or national public campaigns that focus on: public health, consumer protection, environment, citizenship, social and economic development, education, culture, housing policy, community development, human rights, fight against corruption, rural issues, equal opportunities, etc.)
 - o Organizational Development for NGOs (increasing the organizational capacity of NGOs in Romania, the efficiency and effectiveness of these organization as a whole)
 - NGO Resource Centers (establishment of NGO Resource Centers, the strengthening of existing NGO Resource Centers)
 - NGO networks (projects that aim to set up and/or reinforce the networks/ coalitions between NGOs, but also to increase participation of Romanian NGOs in local/regional/national/trans-national networks at European level)

- 2) **Adoption and implementation of the *acquis communautaire*** - projects that aim encouraging NGOs to play an increasing role in the promotion and implementation of the *acquis communautaire* in the fields of environmental protection, consumer protection and socio-economic development.

- 3) **Democracy, human rights, the rule of law and independence of justice** with the following sections:

APPENDIX 2

- NGOs promoting democracy, human rights, the rule of law and independence of justice
- Support for professional organizations of magistrates

The deadline for submission of the proposals is 17 November 2005 at 16:00 h. Further information can be obtained at Civil Society Development Foundation, telephone: 310 01 77, email: corina@fdsc.ro; Information Center of the European Commission in Romania, telephone: 315 34 70, e-mail: contact@infoeuropa.ro or www.infoeuropa.ro.

~ MATRA KAP ~

The Royal Netherlands Embassy has also announced a new deadline for the already well known small grants program. The deadline for submission of the proposals is 11 November 2005 (postal date).

The eligible activities have to focus on one or several of the following themes: legislation and law, public administration/public order, public information/media, human rights/minorities, environmental protection, strengthening the organizational capacity of NGOs, labor and social policies, health care, education, culture, welfare and development of housing policies. The application form, as well as other information concerning the application procedure, can be accessed at: www.olanda.ro.

~ THE YOUTH PROGRAM ~

The youth program offers the organizations from South-East European countries the possibility to send proposals for Youth exchanges, European Voluntary Service and Support Measures.

The deadline for submission of the proposals is 1st November 2005. More information can be found at www.salto-youth.net/seecooperation.

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