

YOUTH

Moving Young People to the Forefront of Political Participation

Children and young adults will soon make up nearly 70 percent of the population in many developing countries. This so-called “youth bulge” represents a potentially positive force for change. In countries beset by conflict, however, youth are often easy prey for extremist elements. Forced or recruited as child soldiers or under the sway of autocratic political leaders, they all too frequently become pawns in struggles that divide and tear apart their societies. Engaging youth in the political process is a means to combat instability and extremism.

To initiate dialogue within the international community about the positive impact young citizens can have when they engage in politics in conflict and post-conflict societies, NDI and the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars brought NDI program alumni from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kenya, and Liberia together with representatives from academia and the development community for a seminar on “Youth and Politics in Conflict Contexts” held in Washington, D.C. on May 16. Panelists from each of the three countries used their personal experiences to illustrate how political engagement helped them meet the challenges facing young people in conflict situations.

Representatives from the Council on Foreign Relations, the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP),



Seminar participant Indira Karovic (second row, third from right), presently a Member of Parliament from Bosnia and Herzegovina, posing with fellow legislative interns in 2005.

the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the World Bank, and other donors, non-governmental organizations and think tanks attended the seminar, which served as a launch

for a larger initiative that includes the development of case studies and a toolkit to facilitate youth engagement in political processes.

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WOMEN

New Technology Supports Women in Politics

Though the number of women in politics has increased in recent years, they are still under-represented and face many obstacles to full political participation. In 2006, less than 17 percent of parliamentarians around the world were women. Currently, of the world’s 194 states and governments, only 12 are run by either a female president or prime minister.

Until recently, there was no single comprehensive resource to help women around the world share experiences and



The iKNOW Politics website.

ideas, and no forum for discussion on how to overcome the barriers and meet the challenges of participating fully in politics. To address this need, NDI, the International Institute for Democracy and

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John Imoite, Executive Director of Kenya's Forum for the Restoration of Democracy-People (FORD-P), and a graduate of NDI's Young Political Leaders Academy (YPLA), remarked that, "At the beginning of the program, participants were standing on desks screaming at each other; we thought fights were going to break out. At the end, however, we were friends who could negotiate issues. Instead of looking at politics as winner-takes-all, we realized if we compromised we all would be winners." The YPLA program, developed at the request of Kenyan political parties to help reduce potential for violence in the run-up to the 2002 presidential election, engaged young leaders from eight political parties in workshops and group projects. Kenyan political leaders credited the program with contributing to the peaceful conduct of that election, a marked improvement over previous polls.

Young people are a fundamental part of the solution to the problems posed by weak democratic institutions and processes. Efforts to promote the principles of good governance and activism among youth have contributed to democratic change in Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union and Africa. Young people have contributed to public debates in their communities, promoted greater accountability in government, combated



Participants in NDI's legislative internship program in Indonesia.



Young observers watch the elections in Liberia.

corruption, and entered the political arena with their own voice and goals.

Focus group research shows that young, first-time voters are more idealistic in their goals and less loyal to established traditions. Youth are more likely to take political risks and often have more time to dedicate to political causes than adults. With encouragement and support, youth who participate in political processes often become active and engaged members of their communities over the longer term.

Work with youth is central to more than two dozen NDI programs currently being implemented around the world. Institute activities with young people are designed to mobilize their energy, passion, and interests, and help them engage actively and constructively in the political processes of their respective societies. By helping young people organize and become politically active, NDI hopes to address the challenges of alienation, apathy, violence, and ignorance that may threaten the stability of an emerging democracy.

This approach is evident in NDI's work to help political parties become more inclusive, representative and effective. NDI has worked with over 20,000 young party members around the world to build leadership skills. With the cooperation of party leaders, many of these young people have successfully championed new ideas and helped fuel party reform efforts.

Young civic activists have been instrumental in many election monitoring and advocacy campaigns conducted by NDI's local partners, bringing enthusiasm and new perspectives on how to motivate citizens and interact with public officials. During Indonesia's 2004 and 2005 election cycle, NDI provided technical assistance to civic groups to monitor the polls. The Institute's partners recruited and deployed 30,000 volunteers, the majority of whom were youth, to be nonpartisan election observers.

NDI has supported more than 11,000 young people in parliamentary internship programs in 25 countries. These programs typically place university students in committee staff positions and in members' offices to conduct research or support constituency and media outreach activities. One example is Macedonia, where NDI developed an internship program to fulfill the legislature's need for increased administrative and research support. Since the program's inception in 1999, over 350 university students have staffed committees and member offices. In 2005, Macedonia's parliament assumed full responsibility for the longer term administration of the program. Many past program participants have pursued professional careers in politics and government, including Gordana Jankuloska, Macedonia's Interior Minister.



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Electoral Assistance (IDEA), the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) joined resources and expertise to create the International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics (iKNOW Politics), an international network devoted to the enhancement of women's role in politics.

iKNOW Politics is a virtual forum that creates and disseminates knowledge and resources to help elected officials, practitioners, candidates, and other stakeholders promote gender-sensitive public policies and women's full political participation. The network was launched in February at the 51st Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women before more than 300 government, NGO, think tank and media representatives. This online workspace, available in English, French, Spanish and soon Arabic, engages participants by:

- **Providing access** to an online library with current materials and research, as well as the expertise of scholars and practitioners made available directly to network members;
- **Creating new knowledge** through mediated discussion forums, information exchange, and expert responses to member queries; and
- **Sharing information** as members report their experiences, lessons learned and best practices.

NDI Board Member Geraldine Ferraro, at the launch of iKNOW Politics. "I know the difficulties of being a woman in politics, she said. "When I ran for vice-president in 1984, I let women around the United States know that there are no limits to what we can do. This is made even truer for women around the world by iKNOW Politics."

Since its launch, thousands of women worldwide are visiting the website; and, more than 1,300 women have formally joined the iKNOW Politics network, sharing their experiences and ideas on an ongoing basis. Currently there are over 700 resources available on the site.

In the words of Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, "While the winds of change have begun to blow, women remain on the fringes of political power. That is why the creation of iKNOW Politics, the premier network for women in politics, will provide women with the tools necessary to participate meaningfully in every facet of political life."

To explore iKNOW Politics, please visit www.iknowpolitics.org.

NEPAL

Engaging Youth in the Transition Process

Nepali youth were at the forefront of the mass demonstrations that ended the absolute rule of Nepal's King Gyanendra in April 2006. A governing coalition composed of representatives from Nepal's eight major political parties has since signed a ceasefire with leaders from the country's Maoist insurgency, bringing an end to a decade-long civil war that claimed over 10,000 lives.



Youth party activists at a leadership development training in Kathmandu, Nepal.

Elections to a special constituent assembly that will draft a new constitution, originally scheduled for June 2007, will be held in November.

While the current government has taken tentative steps to address some of the underlying issues that fueled the insurgency and political instability, political party leaders have paid little attention to the concerns of average citizens, many of whom face entrenched gender and ethnic discrimination while lacking basic access to education, economic opportunities, health care and land. The Maoist commitment to the peace process is tenuous, while law and order throughout the country has steadily deteriorated over the past year.

The prominent role of youth in the protest movement demonstrated their political strength. In a country where 60 percent of the population is under the age of 35, youth engagement in the unfolding transition will be critical to its long-term success. Despite the participation of thousands of citizens in the demonstrations that challenged King Gyanendra's

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Haitians Take Action to Improve Their Communities



DFA students participate in a theatrical production about democratic values in Haiti.

Over two centuries since winning independence from France, Haiti continues to face difficult challenges in developing a democratic culture and promoting sustainable economic growth. Cycles of political instability, fueled by successive military coups, periods of brutal dictatorial rule and endemic corruption, have left the country hobbled by the highest poverty rate in the Americas. Educational levels are low, while unemployment stands at 65 percent.

As Haiti's new elected government begins to address the country's political and economic needs, Haitian citizens are increasingly engaged in efforts to improve life at the community level. Armed with practical information about their rights and responsibilities as citizens, as well as organizing and outreach techniques, Haitian youth in particular are demonstrating the ability to solve problems through community action and advocacy.

Begun in 2002 and designed in cooperation with Street Law, a widely respected civic education organization, NDI's Democracy for All (DFA) program uses interactive teaching methods to provide young participants with an understanding

of democratic practices and institutions, and the tools to take practical civic action at the community level. Since its inception, DFA programs have been held in 40 schools with the participation of over 4,000 students.

DFA builds on NDI's Civic Forum program in Haiti, begun in 1998. Despite the

country's daunting political, social, and economic challenges, Civic Forum has demonstrated the positive impact of organized citizen action, even in such conflict-prone areas as Bel Aire, Carrefour, Cité Soleil and Martissant. To date, more than 200,000 Haitians have taken part in Civic Forum, nearly half of whom are women.

Similar to programs conducted in Albania, Bosnia, East Timor, Kosovo, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and the West Bank/Gaza, Civic Forum in Haiti is based on the tested principle that providing citizens at

the grassroots level with knowledge, tools and confidence can help them foster positive political and economic change in their communities. Joseph Willias, president of OPDEPT, a communal civic association based in Petit Goâve, noted, "In the past, people used to solve conflicts using machetes and ended up in jail... thanks to the Civic Forum we now know, there are other ways to deal with problems, especially through dialogue, whether it's played out inside an organization or in a court room."

Civic Forum participants have created more than 220 "Initiative Committees" across the country. These community action groups have organized hundreds of projects to date, including: the construction of health clinics, schools, and roads; reforestation and soil conservation to protect watersheds; the provision of potable water; and the development of self-sustaining community gardens with the cooperation of the governments of Argentina and Brazil. In-kind donations of labor and materials from citizens and local organizations have supported most of these initiatives.

Using the DFA program as a springboard for action, Haitian students have designed, led and participated in the following activities:

- Creating the Committee to Defend the Rights of Youth in Jeremie to put youth issues on the community agenda;
- Serving as election observers in Croix des Bouquets;
- Taking part in community clean-up days in Cap-Haitian, Lascahobas, Ouanaminthe and Fort-Liberté;
- Supporting voter participation drives for the 2006 elections in Lascahobas and Maissade;
- Organizing HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns in Jeremie;
- Composing and performing civic education plays for local community audiences in Croix des Bouquets, Cap-Haitian, Ouanaminthe, Jeremie, Port-au-Prince as well as for national broadcast; and
- Interacting with government officials by, for example, inviting the mayor in Pestel to serve as a DFA instructor. Police officials, Jeremie's attorney general and six justices of the peace also accepted invitations to explain their roles during a DFA session.

Charting a New Course

The inauguration of President Sidi Mohamed Ould Cheikh Abdallahi on April 19 marked a milestone in the political transition process of one of the world's poorest and most under-developed Muslim nations. Begun under the cloud of a 2005 military coup d'etat against long-serving President Maaouiya Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya, an autocratic ruler who filled jail cells with opposition leaders and forced many more into exile, the political openness of the transition encouraged the participation of Mauritians across the country's deep ethnic divide.

The loosening of press restrictions and other curbs on civil liberties led to active and unfettered campaigning by all competing parties, as well as Mauritania's first-ever presidential debates. Over 73 percent of registered Mauritanian voters turned out to elect 95 National Assembly members and 3,688 municipal councilors over two rounds of voting in October and November. Nearly 70 percent voted in the two-round presidential election in early 2007 in the most competitive presidential poll in the Arab world. President Abdallahi defeated Ahmed Ould Daddah by a margin of 6 percent.

Responding to a campaign led by the NDI-supported Women's Steering



The vote count for the first round of Mauritania's legislative elections went long into the night.



Mauritians wait in line to vote during the first round of legislative elections in November 2006.

Committee, the transitional government approved an election law quota requiring 20 percent representation by women on electoral lists. Women won nine of 43 National Assembly seats, or 21 percent, while the results from the municipal elections were even more impressive with women winning 30 percent of 3,688 council seats.

In its promotion of a political reform agenda and the inclusion of groups marginalized and even outlawed under the Taya regime, the transition government laid the groundwork for Mauritania's first credible elections and longer-term political stability. NDI's support for the transition process included the establishment of a political party resource center that provided a neutral environment in which the Institute

helped both established and newly formed political parties and coalitions develop strategies to communicate and compete more effectively. Technical assistance and support for presidential candidate debates around the country helped spur the development of distinct, issue-based party platforms and focused attention on the interests of voters beyond the capital, Nouakchott.

More than 350 regional representatives of political parties attended NDI-sponsored poll-watcher trainings. They in turn trained more than 7,000 party members. In their preliminary statement, European Union observers praised the significant presence of party poll-watchers in elections that "unfolded calmly and in a free atmosphere."

After years of political domination by Mauritania's White Moors, President Abdallahi's naming of ministers from the Afro-Mauritanian community signals the willingness of the new government to address longstanding ethnic divisions. NDI has designed post-electoral programs to support national reconciliation efforts, and will also provide training to newly elected legislators in key areas of concern to voters, including budget transparency and natural resource management.



Crowds gather at a campaign rally in Nouakchott.

Candidate Debates Encourage Fair Competition and Exchange of Ideas

In a diverse range of countries, candidate debates have become an increasingly effective means of promoting fair electoral competition and enhancing civic education efforts. In environments where leaders are more often chosen on the basis of personality, religion or ethnicity, such forums help voters make more informed choices at the ballot box by focusing discussion on issues. Debates have helped a healthy degree of political competition in countries emerging from single-party rule. In post-conflict settings, candidate forums promote civility and reconciliation, and have been shown to reduce political tensions.

NDI has provided technical and logistical support to civic groups and candidates engaged in debates in more than 25 countries around the world, often working in partnership with the Commission on Presidential Debates (CPD), a non-profit, nonpartisan organization that has sponsored and produced U.S. presidential and vice presidential debates since 1988.

Recent elections in Cambodia, Mauritania and Nigeria illustrate the importance of debates in three countries undergoing political change.

In *Cambodia*, where the Cambodia People's Party (CPP) has dominated politics since the overthrow of the Khmer Rouge in 1978, opposition voices have struggled to be heard. To help voters make informed choices in advance of last April's communal elections, community-based civic groups organized 31 debates in 10 provinces with the participation of 10 political parties. More than 18,500 citizens attended debates, while thousands more tuned in via international and national radio broadcasts. NDI provided technical and logistical support to the debate organizers, and offered training in public speaking and instruction on the debate format to candidate participants.

Although the CPP retained control of most commune councils, the opposition

Sam Rainsy Party (SRP) won approximately 25 percent of the popular vote, doubling its number of council seats and gaining representation in more than 90 percent of the councils. The SRP's newly won foothold in almost every commune in the country represents a shift in Cambodia's political landscape.

Mauritania's two-round presidential election last March marked a significant step forward in a political transition process set in motion by the military overthrow of long-serving authoritarian President Maaouiya Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya in 2005. Political party and independent candidates campaigned vigorously, received balanced

topics of concern to voters that included national reconciliation, economic reform and poverty reduction.

While marred by serious irregularities, *Nigeria's* 2007 elections marked the first time in the country's history that an elected civilian government completed two full terms in office without military intervention and handed over power to another elected leader. The Nigerian Election Debates Group (NEDG), a coalition of more than 20 civic organizations, invited 26 presidential candidates to face off in 12 individual, 90-minute debates broadcast live across the country on topics ranging from the conflict in the



Candidates in Cambodia's communal elections join hands after a debate.

media coverage and sought to address the full range of issues of interest to the electorate in what was the most competitive presidential election in the Arab world. NDI offered training to all 19 presidential candidates on the development and delivery of their campaign platforms, leading to a televised debate between the two presidential run-off candidates. The debate was broadcast live on national radio and television, as well as by the pan-Arab news channel *Al-Jazeera*. NDI helped negotiate the agreement between the two candidates for the two-hour event, and prepared debate moderators to cover pre-selected

oil-rich Niger Delta to poverty, women's rights, constitutional reform, privatization, education and oil policy. According to Nigeria's *Daily Independent* newspaper, these issue-driven debates "revealed the contenders and pretenders to the presidential throne." NDI and the CPD have provided technical advice to Nigerian debate advocates since 2002. In advance of the 2007 debates, NDI and the CPD offered recommendations to the NEGD on topics ranging from candidate selection criteria to voter education issues and the production of the debates themselves.

Supporting Political Development in Eurasia



Kyrgyzstan government representatives visit city hall in Lublin, Poland.

Meetings between Kyrgyzstan government representatives and their Polish counterparts sponsored by the Warsaw-based European Institute for Democracy (EID) last January gave members of Kyrgyzstan's presidential administration fresh insights into ways that executive branch officials can manage everyday governance challenges while responding to the needs and concerns of citizens. EID Director Dorota Mitrus describes this and dozens of other past EID programs designed to support reform efforts in former Soviet bloc countries as "repayment of an obligation for all the help and support given to Poland from the democratic world during communist times."

Created by a group of Polish political activists and former NDI staff members

in 1998, EID is a legacy of NDI's democracy assistance programs in Poland in the mid-1990s. In partnership with the Institute, EID programs complement the assistance NDI provides participants in their home countries.

During the past year, EID has provided guidance and support to women activists from Belarus and Kyrgyzstan, Moldovan and Kyrgyz youth political leaders and Tajik party activists. And EID is working with members of Ukraine's presidential administration to implement internal reforms in accordance with European Union work standards.

Over the past decade, EID and NDI have brought more than 350 Eurasian political and civic activists to Poland for discussions with prominent Polish political leaders;

visits to civic organizations, political party and parliamentary offices; and training workshops on advocacy skills, coalition building and organizational development.

Though Poland's political transformation is unique, longstanding cultural ties and shared experiences under Communist rule help Eurasian activists identify with and learn from Poland's democratic development. Polish interlocutors—whether from political parties, government institutions or civil society—also benefit from sharing ideas and learning from the challenges faced by others in the region.

EID program participants gain firsthand knowledge of the daily work of Polish political parties, government institutions, civic organizations and the media. More pertinently, they develop an appreciation of how these organizations and institutions continue to evolve to meet the ongoing challenges of deepening and expanding democratic norms and practices. The constructive environment developed by EID, away from the daily pressures and distractions of work back home, has helped participants focus on ways to use what they have learned to improve their own organizations and institutions.



EID conducts training session with representatives from Azerbaijan.



Ukrainians meet with Lech Walesa (front, second from left) in Warsaw, Poland.

An Election That Failed the Nigerian People

Serious and widespread irregularities undermined the credibility of Nigeria's 2007 polls, the country's third set of general elections since the transition from military rule in 1998. Both international observers and domestic election monitors to the April 21 presidential and legislative elections witnessed improper conduct by security agents, stuffing and snatching of ballot boxes, intimidation by party agents and vote buying. Additional problems included the disenfranchisement of voters through a haphazard and non-transparent voter registration process; the omission on ballot papers of the names of some candidates for legislative office; the lack of secrecy in voting; under-age voting; and a multi-tiered vote counting process that was vulnerable to manipulation.



NDI observers Christopher Fomunyoh, Madeleine Albright and Joe Clark watch ballot counting at a polling station near Abuja.

NDI's international observation delegation, led by the Institute's Chairman, Madeleine K. Albright, concluded that "...the electoral process failed the Nigerian people. The cumulative effect of the serious problems the delegation witnessed substantially compromised the integrity of the electoral process. As a result, at this stage, it is unclear whether the April 21 elections reflect the will of the Nigerian people."

Perhaps the most serious problem was the late delivery of ballots and other voting material, and the delay in opening polling sites. "This represented a fundamental

barrier to popular political participation..." the delegation stated. "In all the elections that NDI has observed in every region of the world, such a delay in the delivery of essential electoral material and in the opening of polling sites is unprecedented."

The NDI delegation was co-led by Mahamane Ousmane, Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament and former President of Niger; Amos Sawyer, former President of Liberia; Joe Clark, former Prime Minister of Canada; Jeanne Shaheen, Director of the Institute of Politics at the John F. Kennedy School of Government of Harvard University and former Governor of New Hampshire; Justice Yvonne Mokgoro of the Constitutional Court of South Africa; and Kenneth Wollack, President of NDI. The observer group included political and civic leaders, election experts and regional specialists from 16 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and North America. An additional team of long-term observers deployed to all six of the country's geo-political zones during the voter registration and campaign periods. Through financial and material assistance, NDI also supported the efforts of Nigerian civic organizations, which trained and deployed more than 50,000 election monitors.

"What is troubling about the election is not that some few things went dramatically wrong, but that the 2007 polls represent a significant step backward in the conduct of elections in Nigeria," said delegation co-leader Joe Clark. The delegation noted, however, a number of positive trends in Nigeria's democratic process that give rise to hope. These include: an increasingly independent judiciary that responded in a timely way to the deadlines imposed by the electoral calendar; a legislature that exercised its oversight and representative functions more effectively; a civil society that mobilized in large numbers to monitor the electoral process and to educate voters; and a more vibrant media that created channels for the expression



Nigerians debate electoral reform strategies at the post-election conference in Abuja.

of diverse views and the dissemination of information. With many court challenges to election results pending and against a backdrop of demonstrations and strikes, President Umaru Yar'Adua was sworn into office on May 29.

Testifying before the U.S. House of Representative's Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health on June 7, Kenneth Wollack stressed the need for Nigeria's new government to make an urgent commitment and take extraordinary steps to strengthen the country's democratic institutions in the wake of the election. "Immediate steps to undertake broad and genuine reform of the electoral process may provide an opportunity to regain some of the lost trust and confidence of the Nigerian people and democrats around the world," he said.

In order to maintain momentum for electoral reform, NDI joined with the Nigerian Bar Association and the Nigerian Labour Congress in sponsoring a post-election conference in July at which political and civic leaders identified and debated strategies for improving Nigeria's electoral system. Joe Clark delivered the keynote address, and along with Nigerian participants urged civil society to take the lead in building popular consensus around a reform agenda and maintaining pressure on elected leaders to ensure the implementation of the changes needed to strengthen respect for democratic principles in future elections.

Strengthening Democracy in the World's Newest Country

Montenegro's peaceful transition to independence began the final chapter in the lengthy and often bloody disintegration of the former Yugoslavia. On May 21, 2006, the people of Montenegro cast their ballots in a much-anticipated and highly charged referendum on the nation's status, opting for independence over continued union with Serbia.

During the referendum process, NDI's local partner organization, the Montenegrin Center for Democratic Transition (CDT), provided a nonpartisan voice, monitoring the campaign and composing a code of conduct that was endorsed by the majority of participating political parties. CDT fielded observers on election day to ensure the legitimacy of the vote, using an innovative form of text messaging technology developed by NDI to report on voter turnout throughout the day. In addition, CDT conducted a parallel vote tabulation to provide a quick prediction of the outcome and deter potential fraud in the counting process.

Following the vote for independence, NDI built upon its previous work with the Montenegrin parliament to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the legislative body. By gauging the institution's strengths and weaknesses, NDI provided

Montenegro's new political leadership with a blueprint for procedural and organizational improvements. As a result, the parliamentary leadership requested and was granted a 100 percent increase in the institution's budget, enabling it to begin implementing proposed reforms such as hiring new professional staff members.

In my opinion, Montenegrin MPs are not aware of who they should represent in Parliament. More precisely, they do not serve the citizens sufficiently. I believe that this visit, in a certain way, directed our attention toward this issue.

—MP Miodrag Ilickovic, NDI-IRG study mission participant.

In April, 16 new staff members began to work at parliament, and a new website based on suggestions from the assessment was launched in May. With NDI's support, work has begun to solve the problem of lack of space for MPs and committees, to establish a clear plan of work, and to define MP benefits and allowances. In

addition, the opposition secured two committee chairmanships, allowing them a greater role in parliamentary affairs. Over a two-week period, NDI worked with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) to conduct an orientation for parliamentary members and staff. The orientation introduced new MPs to parliament and familiarized returning MPs with recent changes, such as the new rules of procedure that were drafted and adopted with assistance from the Institute.

NDI also organized a study mission to the United States for a multi-party delegation of nine MPs. Funded by the Institute for Representative Government (IRG), the visit provided participants with an opportunity to examine the roles and functions of committees, political party caucuses, parliamentary support services, and mechanisms for constituency outreach.

Parliamentary leaders have adopted many of the recommendations contained in the publicly released assessment report as benchmarks for future development. Currently, NDI is working with parliament to put into practice some of the lessons learned on the study mission and to support the implementation of the report's recommendations.



CDT's press conference during the referendum was critical to maintaining calm and instilling confidence in the results.



Montenegrin MPs meet with Ambassador Nebojsa Kaludjerovic (far right), Montenegro's representative to the UN, during the NDI-IRG study mission.

Honoring African Women

NDI will present its third annual Madeleine K. Albright Grant to the 50/50 Group of Sierra Leone at a luncheon in Washington on October 24. Founded in 2001 to promote the participation of women in the political reconstruction of Sierra Leone following the country's devastating 11-year civil war, the 50/50 Group began with a handful of women meeting in borrowed space in Freetown. Today, it is a nationally recognized organization working actively to change public perceptions of women in politics, remove barriers to women's political participation, and equip women candidates with the tools needed to win political office and govern effectively.



Madeleine K. Albright speaking at the 2006 grant luncheon in Washington, D.C.

The 50/50 Group's efforts to strengthen the role of women in politics extend beyond Sierra Leone's borders to include activities in Ghana, Nigeria and Liberia. The United Nations Mission in Liberia requested assistance from 50/50's founder to help prepare and train female candidates for Liberia's October 2005 general election, which resulted in the election of Africa's first female head of state, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.

NDI will also honor President Johnson Sirleaf with its W. Averell Harriman Democracy Award at the October luncheon for her courageous leadership in Liberia and the role she has played in encouraging women's participation in the democratic process. President Johnson Sirleaf's first contact with NDI took place in 1986 when, shortly after her release from prison under then President Samuel Doe, she participated in a roundtable discussion on prospects for democracy in Liberia. Two decades later, NDI was proud to join with the Liberia Ministry of Gender and Development to co-host a women's forum in Monrovia on the eve of her inauguration in January 2006.

Established in 2005, the Madeleine K. Albright Grant builds on NDI's Win With Women Global Initiative, which promotes strategies for increasing women's political leadership worldwide. A selection committee reviews applications for the \$25,000 award based on the strength of their proposals to further women's political participation. Past recipients include the Women's Political Caucus of Indonesia and the Mostar Women Citizens' Initiative of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The W. Averell Harriman Democracy Award is presented annually to an individual or organization that has demonstrated a sustained commitment to democracy and human rights. Past recipients have included: former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan; the eight political party leaders who negotiated the Northern Ireland peace agreement; Varela Project leader Oswaldo Payá of Cuba; Burmese democratic leader Aung San Suu Kyi; Czech Republic President Vaclav Havel; Polish Foreign Minister Bronislaw Geremek; Chile's 1988 Free Election Movement; former U.S. Presidents Bill Clinton and Jimmy Carter; Senegalese President



Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf addresses an NDI-sponsored women's forum in Monrovia on January 14, 2006.

Abdoulaye Wade; Philippines President Corazon Aquino; the late Georgian Prime Minister Zurab Zhvania; then-First Lady Hillary Clinton; Vice President Walter Mondale; Senators Edward Kennedy, Richard Lugar, Joseph Biden and George Mitchell; the late AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland; Linda and the late Peter Biehl of the Amy Biehl Foundation in South Africa; and then-U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Madeleine Albright.



Participants at the women's forum in Monrovia embrace in celebration of President Johnson Sirleaf's inauguration.

Citizen Participation Promotes Inclusive Election Process

A three-year transition process intended to end years of misrule and civil war in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) culminated with national elections in 2006. Despite daunting logistical challenges, nearly 70 percent of the country's 25 million registered voters cast ballots on July 30, in the country's first democratic elections since 1960. Transitional President Joseph Kabila defeated former rebel leader and transitional Vice-President Jean-Pierre Bemba in an October 29 presidential runoff. Irregularities were noted in both rounds, but many of the problems were attributed to the country's damaged infrastructure and the low education levels of both polling officials and voters.

In a country the size of Western Europe, NDI sought to help build confidence and transparency in the electoral process by facilitating regular meetings between members of the electoral commission and political party leaders, and co-organizing political party forums throughout the country that gave political party leaders opportunities to present their platforms to, and hear directly from citizens.



Over 100,000 Congolese poll watchers monitored the voting process in order to guarantee transparent and credible elections.

In one of the Institute's largest poll-watcher programs to date, NDI also helped to train 34,000 party poll-watchers to monitor the July and October presidential, legislative and provincial elections. Of that number, 4,000 trained additional poll-watchers in their respective political parties and coalitions at the provincial level. In total, more than 100,000 poll-watchers monitored voting in the country's 50,000 polling stations on election day.

The DRC's five-year conflict claimed an estimated three million lives. Following the elections, outbreaks of violence continued, particularly in the country's volatile eastern region as well as in the capital of Kinshasa. As the Congolese people strive to improve governance in an underdeveloped, post-conflict setting with enormous socio-economic and political challenges, NDI is helping newly elected



Congolese citizens stand in line to cast their ballots in the country's first democratic elections since 1960.

representatives and party leaders at the national and provincial levels increase government responsiveness and citizen participation in the policymaking process.

NEPAL

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autocratic rule, avenues for constructive public participation in the political decision-making process remain limited.

In July 2006, NDI brought together youth activists from a cross-section of Nepal's political parties to help improve their ability to play more active roles in their respective parties. During a training program that included sessions on party organizing and public speaking, these young activists debated the challenges facing them as party youth, as well as the larger political challenges facing the country. NDI took the training a step further last March, bringing together political party youth leaders in a workshop on political communication and message development.

NDI's support for the upcoming electoral process includes the development of a

political party poll-watching program to improve the ability of designated party agents to monitor and report on the constituent and general elections. The Institute will also help develop and train a national civic organization to monitor electoral preparations and the conduct of the elections themselves.

Programs to encourage the participation of disadvantaged groups, including youth, will take NDI staff to the remote Karnali region of mid-western Nepal, and other districts. The NDI-supported Multi Party Women's Alliance is expanding its membership and opening branch offices in many of Nepal's rural districts. Created in 2006, the Alliance includes women leaders from all major parties dedicated to working across party lines to address issues that impact the status of women in Nepal.

RECENT PUBLICATION

Promoting the Development of More Democratic Legislatures

There have been many international initiatives to define and monitor the democratic character of elections, but fewer efforts have been made to develop standards for the institutions that result from a democratic electoral process. Legislative bodies that fail to perform their representative and oversight functions ultimately erode popular support for the democratic system itself.

Toward the Development of International Standards for Democratic Legislatures, published by NDI in January, is a discussion paper intended to stimulate debate within the international community regarding standards for democratic legislatures, thereby helping them become more open, accountable and responsive institutions. Read the paper by visiting www.ndi.org.

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