

ETHIOPIA: CIVIL SOCIETY DEVELOPMENT
Grant No. 663-0007-A-00-7312-00
USAID Final Report
March 1, 1997 - June 30, 1998

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

- I. SUMMARY**
- II. BACKGROUND**
 - A. Political Background*
 - B. NDI Background in Ethiopia*
- III. NDI PROGRAM ACTIVITIES**
 - A. Materials Development workshops*
 - B. Technical & Financial Assistance to Ethiopian NGOs*
 - 1. AIDWO
 - 2. HUNDEE
 - 3. SAHRE
 - 4. WAT
- IV. RESULTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS**
- V. EVALUATION/CONCLUSIONS**
- VI. FUTURE ACTIVITIES**

APPENDICES

- 1. Report: Workshop #1, March 6-7, 1997**
- 2. Report: Workshop #2, April 15-16, 1997**
- 3. Report: Workshop #3, July 29-31, 1997**
- 4. Report: Workshop #4, December 9-11, 1997**
- 5. Trainers' Manual on the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia --
final version (in English)**

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I. SUMMARY

From March 1, 1997 through June 30, 1998, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs's (NDI) Ethiopia program provided essential technical and financial assistance in support of democratic development, especially within Ethiopian civil society. This assistance permitted civil society groups around the country to further define their role and to act as vehicles for popular participation and expression of diverse viewpoints in a country with limited political space. NDI has proven to be a valuable resource to those groups. Their activities have helped to demonstrate to the Ethiopian people and government that civil society serves an important function in promoting more democratic forms of governance, in contrast to the semi-feudal and subsequent Marxist systems that had previously hindered the social, economic, and political development of the country.

During this grant period, NDI enhanced its continuing civil society development program by helping to create, in cooperation with local partners, a training manual on the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) designed for popular dissemination throughout the country. This manual was developed through a series of four workshops in Addis Ababa and consultations around the country.

II. BACKGROUND

A. Political Background

Ethiopia's unique history makes the prospect of developing a democratic political culture and institutions especially challenging. It is in essence an imperial state, with a long history of dominance by the Amhara ethnic group. Ethiopia has been and remains an especially insular society. It was never colonized by a European power, a fact that perhaps presents mixed blessings, since it limited exposure to other channels of political thought and institutions of governance. Few segments of society have proven to be sustained or successful vehicles of change, apart from the former guerrilla movement-turned government, the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) and its associated movements. There is little tradition of independent actors seeking to challenge or limit governmental authority. Finally, a zero-sum approach to politics, which tends to be the current practice in Ethiopia, contrasts to the ideas of compromise and consensus inherent in the functioning of a democratic state.

Although Ethiopia has instituted a range of official democratic reforms, including enacting a

new constitution in 1995 and conducting regional, national and local elections, the consolidation of democracy is still hindered by officially imposed impediments and the nonparticipation of a significant segment of the Ethiopian population in election or other governance-related activities. Despite the establishment of formal democratic structures, public debate and input on policy remains limited. Most Ethiopian citizens still lack understanding of how to use the avenues for participation when and where they exist. They are also generally reluctant and somewhat fearful of participating given the historical realities of Ethiopian governance. Activities by political parties, other than those by the ruling coalition, are limited. Emerging civic organizations have only recently, and very tentatively, begun to undertake efforts to educate citizens about their role in democracy.

Ethiopian NGOs are still in a nascent stage of development and their enabling environment is precarious. The current government is skeptical of many of the newly formed local democracy NGOs, viewing them as actual or potential opposition. For example, the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) has tightened its control over NGOs through a registration process that is unclear, cumbersome, and often arbitrary. Even when NGOs have received the necessary certification to operate, local government officials, often unaware of basic constitutional guarantees to freedom of speech and association, may obstruct their activities.

Ethiopian civil society currently comprises approximately 250 legally registered NGOs, operating primarily in urban areas throughout the country. These groups are predominantly traditional relief and development NGOs and receive the bulk of their funding, although limited, from international sources. Only a handful of these NGOs work in the area of democracy and governance, and most are unfamiliar with advocacy and basic concepts of civic education. There are also an unknown number of religious-, community- and professional-based associations that function without being registered by the government as NGOs.

B. NDI's Background in Ethiopia

NDI's involvement in Ethiopia began in 1991, when the Institute responded to an invitation by President Meles Zenawi to advise on preparations for the 1992 elections. NDI soon augmented its Ethiopia programming and established a field office in Addis Ababa in November 1993. Since that time, NDI has been involved in a number of programs that support popular participation in the democratization process, ranging from election monitoring and civic education activities involving local NGOs to capacity building of Ethiopian political parties. Since 1995, NDI's programs in Ethiopia have focused strictly on civil society support and development.

During this most recent grant period, from March 1, 1997 through June 30, 1998, NDI has sought to address NGO capacity-building efforts by helping NGOs and local government officials to better understand the democratic principles, rights and freedoms that are outlined in the Ethiopian Constitution.

III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

During the course of this grant, NDI worked towards its goal of facilitating the development of a strong and vibrant civil society, while facilitating NGO-to-government communication by initiating a program to teach Ethiopian citizens about their constitution. Major program activities included a series of four workshops in Addis Ababa and numerous consultations in the Gonder and Tigray regions as well as within Addis Ababa. NDI also provided four subgrants ranging from \$5,000 to approximately \$35,000 to Ethiopian NGOs involved in democracy and governance issues.

A. Materials Development Workshops

Since March 1997, NDI and a diverse group of local NGOs, have organized and held four workshops in Addis Ababa with the purpose of developing a training program on the FDRE Constitution for wide dissemination throughout the country. One element of NDI's strategy has been to include government in the planning and implementation of its civic education efforts. For example, local government women's bureau representatives have been included in each of the workshops. As a result, several of those representatives have requested to participate in training of trainers workshops to help disseminate the information. This support has promoted the women's bureaus work in the eyes of the participating NGOs and other government bureaus or agencies. Often, the community sees these local women's bureaus as not having adequate resources or the referral capability to provide a strong buttress for the women's community, as is their role. This constitutional training program has helped strengthen their capacity to provide services and training to women.

In addition to maintaining its legally-registered NGO status, NDI obtained a request from the MOJ to continue its civic education activities, both for civil society groups and the local government, particularly in rural and marginalised communities. An underlying presumption behind this approach has been that if the Institute could assist local NGOs to improve their capacities and to network with each other and with local government entities, then the NGOs would be able to develop a more cooperative arrangement with the Ethiopian Government, which would then help to strengthen trust and common initiatives, while enhancing mutual perceptions, objectives and resources.

For its Addis Ababa workshops, NDI brought together a diverse group of Ethiopians from civil society. A core group of approximately 24 participants attended each of the four sessions. These included representatives from: African Initiative for a Democratic World Order (AIDWO), Oromo Grassroots Development Initiative (HUNDEE), the Society for the Advancement of Human Rights Education (SAHRE), the Women's Association of Tigray (WAT), the AdHoc Committee for Peace and Development, Amhara Women's Development Association, Congress of Ethiopian Trade Unions, Eastern Hararghe Development Association, Ethiopian Women's Lawyers Association,, Inter Africa Group, International Foundation for Education and Self-Help, the Ministry of Education, and the University of Addis Ababa Faculty of Law. Two private lawyers, a gender expert, government women's bureau representatives and a civic education consultant also attended.

Workshop #1, March 6-7, 1997

NDI held the first materials development workshop from March 6-7, 1997 in Addis Ababa. The main objectives of this workshop were to: assess current civic education program activities, methodologies, and materials available in Ethiopia; identify priority themes for civic education activities; facilitate the process of developing program plans and strategies for civic education materials dissemination; and design the framework for a civic education/democracy training program for grassroots participation in local governance. A U.S. civic organizing expert, Ed Brown, served as the international trainer and HUNDEE staff, co-sponsors of the event, facilitated the discussion.

Workshop #2, April 15-16, 1997

On April 15 and 16, 1997 NDI conducted the second workshop in the series. The main objectives of this workshop were to examine civic education programs and methodologies in Ethiopia and elsewhere and to design a civic education program on the Ethiopian Constitution that could be widely disseminated throughout the country in an effort to encourage citizen participation through education; and to prioritize the substantive laws contained in the constitution that the participants believed should be included in a training program on the constitution. The group focused on the articles contained in the Human and Democratic Rights sections of the Constitution. During this workshop, which was co-sponsored by AIDWO, members of AIDWO's Youth Action Clubs performed an abridged version of their democracy play. As a result of this performance, other civic groups have requested AIDWO assistance in designing a similar program for their civic education programs. After this session, NDI employed two Ethiopian consultants to put together a draft trainers manual incorporating all of the points discussed in the previous workshops.

Workshop #3, July 29-31, 1997

At the third workshop, held from July 29-31, 1997, participants had an opportunity to evaluate the draft training manual and to participate in a training-of-trainers exercise using it. They also had the opportunity to have the international trainers share their experiences in the preparation, design and methodologies of civic education materials in South Africa and the United States. International civic education experts were invited to contribute their pretesting and training experiences from their respective countries. The three international civic leaders who acted as lead trainers for the workshop were: Father Michael Weeder, a South African social justice advocate; Ed Brown, an American civil rights, voting rights, and civic educator; and Nick DeMarco, from the American Federation of Teachers in the United States. Following the workshop, NDI staff met with the consultants who had drafted the trainers' manual to make the necessary edits to the document based on the participants' recommendations.

Workshop #4, December 9-11, 1997

NDI held its fourth and final workshop from December 9-11, 1998 in Addis Ababa. The objectives of this workshop were to: design and present a pre-test training session to be critiqued by the trainers and participants; and to finalize the dissemination strategy on the training program outlined in the manual. The facilitators for this workshop were: Ed Brown, NDI Senior Consultant; Zegeye Asfaw, HUNDEE Chairperson; and NDI Field Representative Sue Tatten. In addition to the core group of workshop participants, this session was especially well-attended by representatives

from all the government's regional women's bureaus.

Trainers' Manual on FDRE Constitution

The final version of the manual includes four main sections: Introduction to Human Rights and the FDRE Constitution; Civil and Political Rights; Economic and Social Rights; and Family Rights including the Rights of Women and Children. The manual was divided into two sets of training sessions: the first section containing sessions for use in training trainers, and the second section containing additional training sessions that can be used and adapted to various community settings.

After concluding its fourth and final workshop in December 1997, NDI closed its Ethiopia field office. A portion of its office equipment, including desk-top and lap-top computers, and office furnishings, was distributed to NDI's in-country NGO partners, while the remainder was shipped back to Washington D.C. After terminating its field operations, NDI sent two consultants to Ethiopia to follow-up with its subgrantees' work and to hold consultations with USAID, US Embassy and NGO partners.

Although the manual was not put into its final form by NDI, due to a lack of time prior to office closure, NDI did delegate this task to one of its subgrantees SAHRE. SAHRE is expected to revise, translate, print and distribute NDI's trainer manual by June 1998.

B. Technical & Financial Assistance to Ethiopian NGOs

In addition to conducting workshops, NDI has consulted with numerous NGOs in the capital and around the country, on subjects such as program development, proposal design, strategic planning, and women's programming. NDI also provided four subgrants to the following Ethiopian NGOs during the course of this grant: AIDWO, HUNDEE, SAHRE and WAT. These subgrants ranged from \$5,000 to \$35,000 depending on the needs of the individual organizations.

AIDWO

During this grant period, the Institute's field staff assisted AIDWO in designing a project plan and proposal to continue its civic education and advocacy activities. As a result, NDI provided AIDWO with a grant of approximately \$34,000. NDI also worked with AIDWO staff members to develop an organizational strategic plan. In addition to its youth education programs, AIDWO has conducted numerous town meetings, which provided a forum for public expression. These meetings have brought together politicians and community leaders to address the public on various issues, such as: popular governance, opposition, civil society, human rights, media and the government, etc. Often five to six hundred people attended these meetings, which sparked public interest and lively debates.

HUNDEE

NDI provided HUNDEE with technical advisory support during the grant. HUNDEE has subsequently received funding from the US Embassy Human Rights Fund, Canadian CIDA and NDI

to conduct women's rights awareness workshops in rural communities in the Oromiya region. NDI also assisted HUNDEE in designing and implementing its constitutional rights training programs. These programs have successfully involved local government officials. As a result, the zonal government's Women's Affairs Bureau, in Fiche, approximately 100 km from Addis, asked NDI for financial assistance to conduct a similar women's rights awareness workshop in their area. HUNDEE's subgrant from NDI included funding to conduct this workshop in cooperation with the national Women's Affairs Bureau, at which an NDI field staff member served as a trainer.

HUNDEE's women's awareness programs have recommended that men be included in the awareness workshops and that change would not occur unless they are made aware of the importance of including women in the decision making process and of respecting their rights. HUNDEE combines economic and social development projects with its civic education strategy. In particular, its women's credit schemes are closely tied in with empowerment. HUNDEE has already marked some economic improvements in the community and boasts a 90 percent plus repayment rate among its women credit grantees. In addition, local government women's bureau officials have specifically asked NDI to fund, and HUNDEE to co-sponsor, a similar training for their zone.

SAHRE

SAHRE has asked that NDI provide not only financial assistance but also technical assistance in civic organizing and issue-based campaigning. NDI also provided SAHRE, a private initiative of Ministry of Education staff, with a \$10,000 grant to conduct a pilot project in Amhara Region on advocacy education, specifically on Children's rights. This project intended to bring together educators, local government officials, NGOs, and community-based organizations with a common goal to inform the population about the issue of children's rights and to form monitoring and advocacy committees at local, zonal, and regional levels. This project is the testing ground for a much broader advocacy and rights education program that will be implemented in seven zones of Amhara Region with other international funding.

WAT

NDI has provided a grant of \$5,000 for the Women's Association of Tigray, located in northern Ethiopia, to conduct research on women and family law legislation in the Tigray region.

IV. RESULTS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS

As this report is prepared subsequent to the end of the project, analysis of the projects' results and impact of the project must be by definition preliminary. A full evaluation would need to take place after the materials that are being produced have been disseminated and a perspective on their utility has been developed. Nonetheless, it is possible to make some initial observations regarding the benefits of the project.

First, it should be noted that not all of the goals foreseen at the beginning of the project were met. The reality of working in Ethiopia is that gains will often be incremental and not as definitive as desired. Optimism must be tempered by reality, especially given Ethiopia's history of conquest and

semi-feudal rule. Nonetheless, NDI helped to strengthen the capacity of emerging civic associations, both technically and financially, to serve as a conduit for the democratic process to reach all levels of Ethiopian society. The project also assisted those groups to undertake democracy-related educational activities, it enhanced the ability of citizens and groups to articulate their shared interests, and encouraged government transparency, accountability, and respect for the rule of law. The project sought to ensure that the participant groups' capacity to disseminate information to the widest possible audience was significantly enhanced.

As information about the project spread, the number of organizations interested in benefiting from it grew. Since the commencement of the materials development workshops, NDI has received a number of assistance requests from international and indigenous organizations that can serve as linkages or future conduits of the constitutional training materials developed in the course of the project. These organizations include: Eneweyay, CIVITAS, the Street Law Project, the Women's Teacher Association-Gonder and the Muslim Relief Association.

By the conclusion of this program, NDI and its partners had developed an essential training document for use by human rights and democracy advocates within Ethiopia. The following are specific indicators, which correspond to the program objectives outlined in NDI's proposal. Analysis regarding the extent to which the objectives have been met follows at the end of each set of indicators.

A. Has the overall capacity of democracy and governance NGOs, in terms of programming, been improved?

- * Improvement in NGO program design as measured by individual NGOs themselves and donors;
- * Closer correlation between implementation of planned activities and actual activities occurs more frequently;
- * NGO ability to design and implement relevant and appropriate civic education training programs;
- * Implementation by NGOs of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms;
- * Public request for materials produced by NGOs and translations into local languages;
- * Request by non-D/G NGOs for civic education materials;
- * Timeliness and presentation of financial and activities reporting; and
- * Acceptance of NGO proposals for donor funding.

This project has required Ethiopian NGOs to take the initiative and to work together to ensure that the project reached conclusion. Given the fractious and zero-sum nature of the Ethiopian political culture, simply creating an environment in which a set of NGO groups could work together has been by itself important. While this process did not always work smoothly and seamlessly, a number of different NGOs, and government offices had the experience of coordinating and sharing ideas on the development of the materials. This type of activity, unprecedented in the short history of Ethiopia's democratic development, represents a building block upon which further activities could

take place.

Participating NGOs received requests from other NGOs and, in a couple of cases, from their branch offices for the democracy materials even before they had been officially published. In fact, AIDWO has begun utilizing the NDI materials in its broader program of democracy education.

NDI was pleased to note that there were few problems in terms of financial management of funds allocated under the sub-grant component of the program. The participating civic groups had been selected on the basis of prior relationships with NDI, and with adequate financial management and oversight capacities. Communications and contact were most difficult with WAT, given its location outside of Addis Ababa and its limited communications infrastructure, but eventually the required reports were received.

B. Have the civic organizations improved their capacity to deliver quality democracy education to a wider audience?

- * Incidence of civic education programs both in and outside of Addis Ababa;
- * Responses to evaluations by program participants of civic education programs run by civic groups;
- * Requests by organizations and community members for civic education training;
- * Response by government officials to civic education training programs;
- * Responses to NGO participant evaluations as to international study tour's usefulness to their programs; and
- * Types of programming activities developed by NGOs that have participated in study tours.

Participating organizations clearly have developed an increased capacity to communicate their messages effectively to a wider audience. Through technical assistance provided during the course of the project they gained experience in testing messages and assessing their impact. The creative and often frank feedback participants provided to each other during the course of the workshops enabled groups to consider fresh or alternate perspectives on ways of best disseminating information. During the life of the project groups undertook an increasing number of activities that involved larger numbers of people and sectors of society than had previously been the case.

Partly as a result of information on civic organizing experiences elsewhere that was conveyed through this project, AIDWO has undertaken a number of unprecedented "town hall" style meetings for legislators and their constituents. One such meeting, in Addis Ababa, was attended by over 1,000 people. During this event constituents were able to question their elected representatives on a wide range of issues. AIDWO has sponsored similar fora outside of Addis.

C. Has the NGO civil society sector been involved in education and advocacy activities? Has a coalition of democracy/governance NGOs been formed? If so, is it operational?

INDICATORS:

- * Implementation of workshop, seminar, site visit, individual consultation recommendations and findings by participating NGOs;
- * Requests by NGOs for workshops in areas of concern as identified by the NGOs;
- * Frequency and number of activities that the NGOs have collaborated on together;
- * Development and implementation of public opinion surveys;
- * Response to survey findings;
- * Utilization of survey findings by NGOs and other government or non-government bodies;
- * NGO implementation of programs for community and elected leaders;
- * Participation of community leaders and elected representatives in NGO activities;
- * Response of community leaders and elected representatives to NGO initiatives;
- * Public involvement in communicating their concerns to community or government leaders;
- * The NGO coalition's advocacy in bringing about legislative or policy change;
- * Individual NGO and coalition's contact with parliamentary and other government bodies;
- * Response of Ethiopian government to NGO and coalition advocacy initiatives;
- * Number of training workshops held for local, regional, and government officials;
- * Response of government officials to training workshops held for them;
- * Conduciveness of environment for NGO civic education/advocacy activities;
- * Frequency of problems encountered between NGOs and government actors;
- * Involvement of development NGOs in programs carried out by D/G NGOs;
- * Requests for training by development NGOs;
- * Advocacy initiatives by development NGOs to government; and
- * Networking activities by Ethiopian NGOs that have resulted from their international study tour experience.

It would not be accurate to characterize a result of the program being the formation of a coalition of NGOs, if the term is meant to refer to a group of NGOs whose activities are coordinated by an umbrella body. Certainly, however, the participating NGOs are more aware of activities being undertaken by each other, where their respective areas of comparative advantage lie, and in what areas might their skills be complementary. Thus, the groundwork for increased cooperation in the future has been laid.

Some modest steps have been taken regarding improved communication between civil society and the government as a result of this project. For example, the presence of representatives from the government women's office helped to lower the barrier of suspicion and misunderstanding between civil society and government representatives. It also encouraged civic groups to consider how and under what circumstances it might be appropriate to utilize government resources and infrastructure to assist in the communication of education initiatives messages from civil society. Participants recognized that in this way the example of a productive relationship was possible between different elements within the political culture -- in and of itself a revolutionary concept given Ethiopia's highly polarized political culture.

D. Have the NGOs involved in democracy and governance increased the number of women employed at the program and management levels within their organizations? Have these NGOs

targeted their programming activities to include women's concerns? Has the number of women participating in their activities increased?

INDICATORS:

- *Types of programming of civic NGOs that include a women's component in planning and implementation;
- *Instances where NGOs focusing on women's empowerment have utilized regional government women's bureaus;
- *Implementation by women's bureaus of cooperative arrangements with civic NGOs working in the area of women's empowerment;
- *Frequency and content of training programs for and about women conducted by NGOs, women's bureaus, and other organizations;
- *Beneficiaries' response to women's programming efforts by local NGOs, women's bureaus, and other organizations;
- *Types and frequency of outreach activities by civic NGOs to rural communities;
- *Response by the community, both male and female, of the activities of women's empowerment initiatives;
- *Formation of local NGOs to enhance women's participation within rural communities;
- *Developments within communities that have occurred as a result of civic education; training for women; and
- *Instances where women have participated in the political process.

NDI's program definitely targeted women and women's issues as being central to the development of democratic concepts. NDI undertook a survey of women's attitudes about democracy, and sought – successfully – to engage women in the materials development process. The percentage of women staff members at NDI's partner NGOs was increased to 50 percent at HUNDEE, 25 percent at AIDWO, 40 percent at SAHRE and 100% at WAT. NDI also reached out to the Women's Bureau of the government to encourage their participation.

E. Has the enabling environment for democracy and governance NGOs improved? Have the NGOs been able to implement their democracy-related programs in targeted communities?

INDICATORS:

- * Status of legislation and regulatory process for NGO registration within the MOJ;
- * Incidences where NGOs are able to conduct their activities without government interference;
- * Responses by government officials, particularly those at the local woreda level, to civic NGO activities; and
- * Number of democracy/governance NGOs that have been registered by the MOJ and authorized to work with NDI.

An anecdote is frequently cited of a democracy education program that HUNDEE organized

early in the life of the program. It was in a rural setting, and the local authorities reacted against the seminar by detaining five HUNDEE staff members for over a day. They were then released by the local authorities, who were sensitized to the program and the activities being undertaken. The zone subsequently became the site of a considerable number of programmatic initiatives, with the support of the local government. This episode demonstrates that often the target group for democracy education must be local authorities themselves.

None of the groups with which NDI has worked have had their functioning impeded due to registration-related problems. The executive director of AIDWO has been imprisoned recently. This is apparently due to reasons related to his previous service in government rather than to his civil-society related activities.

NDI's registration status had been in limbo for over a year until it was provisionally granted for a 12-month period in 1996. As a result of the project, government officials gained greater familiarity with NDI's goals, objectives and modus operandi. Registration approval was expeditiously granted a year later. Government officials expressed sincere regret when NDI subsequently informed them of AID's decision not to continue funding for a follow-on project. This event demonstrates a beneficial by-product of the project - greater government appreciation for the work being undertaken.

VI. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

NDI does not envisage returning to Ethiopia immediately due to funding constraints and needs assessments. USAID-Ethiopia, NDI's previous funder for its Ethiopia program, has restructured its democracy and governance program and has terminated NDI's grant agreement.

However, both the US ambassador to Ethiopia and the new USAID mission director have suggested that there may be future opportunities for NDI in Ethiopia. In the meantime, NDI continues to remain in contact with its partner organizations and to seek out opportunities for them to continue to benefit from exposure to democratic development around the world.