

ELECTORAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM  
IN NIGER

*Legislative Elections*  
*January 12, 1995*

**DEBRIEFING AND ANALYSIS**

# National Democratic Institute For International Affairs

conducting nonpartisan international programs to help promote, maintain and strengthen democratic institutions



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## NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) was established in 1983. By working with political parties and other institutions, NDI seeks to promote, maintain and strengthen democratic institutions in new and emerging democracies. The Institute is headquartered in Washington, D.C. and has a staff of 120 with field offices in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America and the former Soviet Union.

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NDI has supported the development of democratic institutions in more than 60 countries. Programs focus on six major areas:

**Political Party Training:** NDI conducts multipartisan training seminars in political development with a broad spectrum of democratic parties. NDI draws international experts to forums where members of fledgling parties learn first-hand the techniques of organization, communication and constituent contact.

**Election Processes:** NDI provides technical assistance for political parties and nonpartisan associations to conduct voter and civic education campaigns and to organize election monitoring programs. The Institute has also organized more than 25 major international observer delegations.

**Strengthening Legislatures:** NDI organizes seminars focusing on legislative procedures, staffing, research information, constituent services, committee structures and the function and role of party caucuses. NDI programs also seek to promote access to the legislative process by citizen groups and the public at large.

**Local Government:** NDI provides technical assistance on a range of topics related to the processes of local governance, including division of responsibility between mayors and municipal councils, and between local and national authorities. NDI programs also promote enhanced communication between local officials and their constituents.

**Civic Organization:** NDI supports and advises nonpartisan groups and political parties engaged in civic and voter education programs. NDI programs work with civic organizations to enhance their organizational capabilities.

**Civil-Military Relations:** NDI brings together military and political leaders to promote dialogue and establish mechanisms for improving civil-military relations.

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## NDI'S ELECTION PROCESSES ACTIVITIES

NDI programs concerning election processes include constitutional and law reform efforts related to political and electoral rights, domestic election monitor training for political parties and nonpartisan civic organizations, election monitoring coordination with other organizations, pre-election assessment missions and international election observer delegations. In the year between September 1993 and September 1994, NDI's elections team assisted NDI's regional teams in each of these program areas.

## PRE-ELECTION ASSESSMENTS AND INTERNATIONAL OBSERVER DELEGATIONS

**MEXICO:** NDI's elections team assisted NDI's Latin America regional team in organizing an international delegation to Mexico's August 21 federal elections. The delegation was jointly sponsored by the International Republican Institute (IRI) and included the participation of a delegation from the Council of Freely Elected Heads of Government of the Carter Center of Emory University. The delegation's 80 members included former heads of state and government, former diplomats, elected officials, political party and civic leaders, legal scholars, regional specialists and elections experts from 17 countries.

**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC:** NDI's elections team assisted NDI's Latin America regional team in organizing a 26-member international delegation to observe the May 16 elections in the Dominican Republic. The delegation was preceded by a five-member international delegation that assessed the campaign environment and election preparations. The international observer delegation detected serious problems and irregularities that, given the very close margin in the preliminary voting results, could have affected the outcome of the elections. NDI has actively monitored the post-election period and has encouraged Dominican authorities to take appropriate steps to rectify the problems.

**CENTRAL AMERICA:** The elections team assisted the Latin America regional team in preparing the joint NDI/Carter Center of Emory University pre-election assessment delegation to Panama and NDI's participation El Salvador's recent elections. NDI's international delegation to El Salvador's elections concentrated on municipalities where NDI is planning local governance programs in the post-election period.



**KAZAKHSTAN:** The elections team assisted NDI's former Soviet Union (FSU) regional team in assessing the pre-election environment before Kazakhstan's March 7 elections and in training election monitors in that country. The team participated in NDI's initial international pre-election assessment delegation, developed materials on election monitoring in the country, helped draft an extensive pre-election report and assisted in organizing a follow-up assessment delegation.

**PAKISTAN:** The elections team assisted NDI's Asia regional team in conducting a comprehensive election monitoring effort for Pakistan's October 1994 elections. That effort included participating in NDI's pre-election assessment mission, coordinating activities of NDI's field representatives in the country for the two months prior to and for approximately one month after the elections and participating in NDI's 35-member international observer delegation to the elections for Pakistan's national and provincial parliaments.

### **DOMESTIC ELECTION MONITORING PROGRAMS**

**GUYANA:** The elections team assisted NDI's Latin America team in providing support to domestic election monitoring efforts for Guyana's August 8 municipal elections. This included providing information on reports by domestic election monitoring organizations in other countries and sending an international delegation to provide assistance on election day, which included leaders of domestic election monitoring organizations from Albania, Nepal and from the West Bank.

**ETHIOPIA:** The elections team assisted NDI's East Africa regional team in planning and conducting a three-day seminar on domestic nonpartisan election monitoring and civic organizing. The seminar, which included an international panel organized by NDI, was sponsored jointly by A-Bu-Gi-Da (an Ethiopian civic organization) and was attended by 70 participants from throughout Ethiopia.

**THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA:** NDI's elections team is assisting NDI's Central and East Europe regional team in its work with the Association for Civic Initiative, which is preparing to monitor national elections this fall.

**MEXICO:** The elections team and NDI's political and civic organization team assisted the Latin America regional team in its work with Civic Alliance/Observation '94 (an umbrella organization of over 300 Mexican civic organizations) to aid in organizing a comprehensive domestic election monitoring effort for the August 1994 presidential election. The program focused on providing assistance to Civic Alliance/Observation '94's effort in organizing its independent nationwide parallel vote tabulation to verify official election results.

**RUSSIA:** NDI's elections team assisted the FSU regional team in planning and executing an election monitoring training program for Russian political parties and civic organizations in 16 cities prior to the December elections. The program began with a two-day "training the trainers" seminar for 12 NDI international trainers (one-half from the U.S. and one-half from

other countries). The trainers then traveled in teams of two to various cities over a two-week period.

**UKRAINE:** The elections team along with NDI's political and civic organization team assisted the FSU regional team in planning an extensive program for training nonpartisan domestic election monitors for the March 27 elections in Ukraine. This program focused on aiding the Non-Partisan Committee of Voters of Ukraine in training and deploying approximately 2,000 monitors on election day.

## **ELECTION LAW PROGRAMS**

**THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA:** NDI's elections team assisted NDI's Central and East Europe regional team in drafting a critique of Macedonia's election law and proposed amendments. The critique was presented to the Minister of Justice, other government officials and to the political parties in that country. It has provided the basis for debate in parliament over election law reform.

**JORDAN:** The elections team is assisting NDI's Middle East regional team in conducting a series of conferences in Jordan on comparative electoral systems co-sponsored with the Al-Urdun Al-Jadid Research Center. The conferences will examine a wide range of electoral issues, including issues relevant to Jordan's electoral development.

**MEXICO:** The elections team assisted the Latin America regional team in planning a two-day seminar organized jointly by Mexico's Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) and NDI. The seminar was attended by IFE officials and an international delegation from NDI. The sessions included consultations on a broad range of issues related to election processes, at a time when IFE was considering additional changes to Mexico's election system.

**MOZAMBIQUE:** The elections team assisted NDI's southern Africa regional team in preparing a two-day seminar with the Mozambique's National Electoral Commission (CNE). The seminar was attended by CNE officials and an international delegation from NDI. The sessions covered a number of electoral issues of interest in the run-up to that country's October 1994 elections.

**SOUTH AFRICA:** The elections team assisted the southern Africa regional team by conducting a series of election law seminars for nine South African political parties prior to the recent elections in that country and by providing assistance to the parties on using the law to protect their electoral rights over the election period. The team also drafted a paper for South Africa's Independent Election Commission (IEC) on standards in evaluating elections and helped to develop scenarios for the IEC, depicting hypothetical problems for IEC rulings on the elections. In addition, the team drafted the sections on South Africa's electoral framework for NDI's publication entitled "The Politics of South Africa on Election Day."

**WEST BANK AND GAZA:** The elections team assisted NDI's Middle East regional team by preparing memoranda on democratic election systems and procedures that were presented to the Palestine Liberation Organization as part of NDI's consultations. The team also prepared materials on local elections for the PLO's commission on election systems.

## **PUBLICATIONS, RESOURCE COLLECTION AND COORDINATION**

**PUBLICATIONS:** The elections team is completing a handbook on organizing election monitoring efforts by nonpartisan domestic organizations. Sections of the handbook have been translated into Spanish for use in NDI's Latin America programs. The team wrote a manual on media monitoring and an outline on nonpartisan monitoring for use in domestic election monitoring efforts. A team member is also published a volume entitled: **GUIDELINES FOR ELECTION BROADCASTING IN TRANSITIONAL DEMOCRACIES (ARTICLE 19; London: August 1994).**

**RESOURCE COLLECTION:** The elections team maintains a library of reports, publications, election laws and other materials to assist NDI's regional teams in developing and implementing programs on election processes. The team also serves as a resource for selecting experts in election processes to participate in NDI programs.

**COORDINATION:** The elections team helps to coordinated NDI's electoral programs with the United Nations, the Organization of American States, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the European Union and with various nongovernmental organizations.

**NDI ELECTION TRAINING  
NIGER PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS  
DECEMBER 26, 1994 - JANUARY 7, 1995**

**DELEGATION BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION**

**Taofiki Aminou** is Secretary General of GERDDES-Afrique, a non-partisan, African-based organization that works toward the development and democratization of African countries. Mr. Aminou has experience in election administration, election processes, civic education, legislative training and political party training. He has previously participated in NDI programs in Senegal, Cameroon, C.A.R., and regional training seminars.

**Theo Noel** has an elections background with experience in training and operations of and training programs in Canada, Botswana, South Africa, Uganda, Haiti, Cambodia, Togo, Mali and Guinea. He has written training manuals for election administration and has trained hundreds of volunteer election workers. He has also worked on post-election evaluations and he has recently returned from Haiti where he worked with the UN on a pre-election assessment mission. Mr. Noel is fluent in French.

**Hilary Miezah** is currently the executive director of ELECTA, a non-profit organization which seeks to assist developing democracies to conduct free and fair elections. Mr. Miezah participated in the South Africa Voter Education program mounted by the International Faculty of Election Experts and Practitioners for political and civic organizations in 1991 under NDI's sponsorship. In April this year, he led an independent observer mission (ELECTA) to South Africa for the national elections. He has previously served as Electoral Officer and on the Electoral Commission in Ghana.

**Hannah M. Baldwin** has extensive experience working on both grassroots and policy levels in Senegal and Mali and has travelled extensively throughout West Africa. Ms. Baldwin presently works for the Foreign Service Institute as Deputy Chair of the African Area Studies Program. She has worked on African issues for the past 24 years for programs sponsored by A.I.D., Peace Corps, and the U.S. Embassy. She has also participated in the NDI Political Party Pollwatching Seminar in Senegal (1993).

**Marianna Drenska** is the National Coordinator for the Bulgarian Association for Fair Elections and Civil Rights (BAFECR). Ms. Drenska has been involved in numerous international projects including the African Election Monitoring Seminar in Benin (1991) and the NDI Political Party Pollwatching Seminar in Senegal (1993). She attended the Institute of Chemical Technology in Sofia. Ms. Drenska speaks French and Italian.

**Tchagbale Zakari** serves as a very active member of GERDDES-Côte d'Ivoire. He has experience in election monitor training in his native country and comes highly recommended by GERDDES.



## NDI STAFF

**Momar Diop** is a field representative for the NDI Ethiopia civic education and political party program. He has served as the Chief of Staff of Senegal's Ministry of Manpower and Vocational Training. He was also National Secretary for Press and Information of the Senegalese Democratic Party. He brings with him a background in education, having taught English as a second language for more than a decade. Mr. Diop has previously participated in NDI programs in Zambia, Senegal, and Niger.

**Christopher Fomunyoh** is a Senior Program Officer at NDI. Before joining NDI as a full time employee in 1993, Mr. Fomunyoh served as a consultant on a number of projects including providing advice to NDI delegations to national elections Ethiopia, Cameroon and Central Africa Republic. Mr. Fomunyoh also organized international missions to observe national elections in Madagascar in 1992 and 1993, on behalf of the African American Institute. Since joining NDI's permanent staff, Mr. Fomunyoh has focused on assisting emerging democracies in Africa consolidate gains made during the transition to multi-party politics. Mr. Fomunyoh was the Program Director for NDI's regional legislative training program conducted in Niger in January 1994 for deputies of the National Assemblies of Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. He holds a Master's Degree in Law, and a Ph.D in Political Science.

**Amy Marshall** is a program assistant with the NDI Southern Africa team. As a field representative in Mozambique, she helped coordinate a national civic education campaign and a domestic election monitor training program. Ms. Marshall was also a United Nations International Observer for the October 1994 Mozambican Presidential and Parliamentary elections. Ms. Marshall has previously worked at a Washington-based marketing firm where she acquired experience in conducting focus groups and organizing national polls.

**Michael Smith** is NDI's field representative in Cotonou, Benin where he coordinates the political party training program for which this seminar has been organized. Mr. Smith has accumulated several years international experience, including two years as a Peace Corps volunteer in the Comoros and in Morocco, and two years as a journalist in Latin America. His political background includes extensive work on U.S. senatorial campaigns.

**Sheldon Yett** has been a journalist for *Institutional Investor*, *The Nation* and *Congressional Quarterly*. He has worked as a reporter in Washington covering electoral politics, American foreign policy, international trade and other issues for the past six years. His overseas experience includes serving two years in Niger as a Peace Corps volunteer. Mr. Yett also worked in Thailand as a reporter covering U.S. - Asian relations. He holds a Master's degree in international economics and American foreign policy from Johns Hopkins University.

**Benjamin Feit**, is a Program Assistant at the National Democratic Institute. In February 1994, Mr. Feit helped to organize a series of focus groups in several locations around Ethiopia to gauge the levels of awareness and receptivity to democracy. Mr. Feit helped to conduct a conference in Addis Ababa in May 1994 on the role of nonpartisan civic organizations in monitoring the political process. Mr. Feit has also worked on legislative training programs in Bangui, CAR (October 1994) and in Dhaka, Bangladesh (September 1993). Prior to joining NDI in August 1993, Mr. Feit was the Assistant to the Director of the Marjorie Kovler Fund, a foundation in Washington DC.

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Ken and Senior Staff  
**FROM:** Niger Team  
**DATE:** January 26, 1995  
**SUBJECT:** Trip Report: 1995 Legislative Elections in Niger; Election-Related Training

### I. SUMMARY

The Nigerien government, civic organizations and the U.S. Embassy in Niamey separately requested that NDI provide assistance to Niger in support of the parliamentary elections that were held January 12, 1995. NDI assistance centered around the design and implementation of a two-day training of trainers program held in Niamey and subsequently repeated in the two regional capitals of Zinder and Tahoua. The seminars, attended by domestic monitoring groups, political party representatives and election commission officials, were designed to help ensure a legitimate electoral process.

Six international experts and selected Nigeriens familiar with the electoral process served as trainers for the seminar in Niamey on December 26 and 27, 1994. The international training faculty included: Theo Noel, a Canadian who has participated in electoral operations and training programs around the world; Hilary Miezah, who is currently the Executive Director of ELECTA, a non-profit organization based in London and which seeks to assist developing democracies to conduct free and fair elections; Hannah Baldwin, Deputy Chair of the African Area Studies Program at the Foreign Service Institute; Mariana Drenska, the National Coordinator for the Bulgarian Association for Fair Elections and Civil Rights (BAFECE); and Aminou Taofiki and Zakari Tchagbale who are members of Benin and Cote d'Ivoire chapters of the *Groupe d'Etudes et de Recherche sur la Démocratie et le Développement* (GERDDES). After the Niamey seminar, the team then split into two groups. One of the groups traveled 900km to Zinder and the other traveled 600km to Tahoua for further training on December 29 and 30.

One hundred five Nigeriens attended the seminar in Niamey, 92 participated in Zinder and 68 in Tahoua. Because the program was intentionally designed for the training of trainers, the Nigeriens trained by the NDI faculty were then encouraged to organize subsequent training programs across the country at the grassroots level. The National Election Commission and some of the civic organizations pursued the follow-up training making it possible for several thousand Nigeriens responsible for the administration and monitoring of the elections to ultimately benefit from the program.

A small team of NDI staff and advisors remained in the country through election day.

The team spent time observing the activities of political parties and civic organizations in the pre-election period as well as informally assisting the election commission and the United Nations Development Programs (UNDP) with the briefing and deployment of international and domestic election monitors.

## **II. BACKGROUND**

### **Political Developments**

In the months preceding the elections, the parliament in Niger had disagreed frequently with President Ousmane over various policy issues. These disagreements developed into a full blown political crisis in September 1994 resulting in the resignation of Prime Minister Issoufou after his party, the *Parti Nigerien pour la Démocratie et le Socialisme* (PNDS), withdrew from the parliamentary majority coalition. The withdrawal of the PNDS left President Ousmane's former majority alliance with only 37 of the 83 seats available in the national assembly. An attempt by President Ousmane to appoint a new prime minister from within the ranks of what remained of the alliance failed, because of a motion of no confidence voted by the new parliamentary majority comprised of deputies from the *Mouvement National pour la Société de Développement* (MNSD) and the PNDS. Three days later on October 15, 1994, President Ousmane dissolved the parliament as provided for under the Nigerien Constitution.

The Nigerien Constitution also states that once the President dissolves parliament, new legislative elections must be held within 90 days. Elections were originally scheduled for December 31, 1994. However, given logistical concerns, that date was changed first to January 7 and finally to January 12.

### **Election Law and Administration**

Arguments over amendments to Niger's electoral code exacerbated tensions between the government and the national assembly before it was dissolved in October 1994. On October 13, the National Assembly passed a bill that was designed to restructure the National Electoral Commission. Among other measures, the bill sought to enhance the autonomy of the commission by insulating its functions from direct oversight by the Ministry of Interior and by limiting the responsibilities of government appointed administrative officials in the commission's regional offices.

The president refused to sign the bill and returned it to the assembly for a second reading. His argument was that, although he, too, supported an independent election commission, the current structure of the commission was adequate and the changes demanded by the National Assembly were logistically impractical. The assembly was dissolved before it could take up the bill for a second time.

The dissolution of the assembly on October 15 forced the scheduling of new legislative elections before any agreement could be reached over who would conduct the necessary

administrative oversight. On November 9, however, after a week of negotiations facilitated by six of the country's leading civic organizations, a compromise was reached. The agreement reduced further the role of the Interior Ministry and gave political parties and civic organizations representation on the election commission.

### **Political Parties**

A total of 15 political parties, including all those that had representation in the former National Assembly, fielded candidates for the election. Seventeen political parties participated in the elections in 1993. Although the election code of Niger forbids political parties from being organized around platforms that foster regionalism and ethnocentrism, some of the political parties are closely associated with specific ethnic groups.

The major political parties represented in the previous parliament and that were now contesting the election include:

- the *Mouvement National pour la Société de Développement* (MNSD-Nassara), created in 1989 by the military-civilian government that was in power at the time. The MNSD was the single state party until the National Conference of 1991 mandated a transition to multiparty politics;
- the *Convention Sociale et Démocratique* (CDS-Rahama) describes itself as a centrist party that advocates social democratic principles as the basis for development in Niger. The party is led by President Mahamane Ousmane;
- the *Parti Nigérien pour la Démocratie et le Socialisme* (PNDS-Tarraya), which defines itself as a leftist party, attracts teachers and other well-educated intellectuals with leaders who hold positions in the labor movement and mineral industry; and
- the *Alliance Nigérienne pour la Démocratie et le Progrès* (ANDP-Zaman Lahiya) founded by Moumouni Adamou Djermakoye, who was president of the National Assembly before it was dissolved in October 1994.

The following five political parties do not enjoy the same degree of nationwide support as those listed above, but also won seats in the National Assembly after the 1993 elections. They include:

- the *Parti Progressiste Nigérien, Section du Rassemblement Démocratique Africain* (PPN-RDA) founded in 1946 as Niger's first political party and headed by Hamani Diori who ruled the country from independence in 1960 to 1974;
- the *Union des Patriotes Démocrates et Progressistes* (UDPD-Chamoua) whose leader and former history professor, André Salifou was president of the *Haute Conseil de la République*, the interim legislative body during the transition to democratic rule;

- the *Union des Forces Populaires pour la Démocratie et le Progrès* (UDFP-Sawaba), a Marxist-oriented party that was founded at the same time as the PPN but banned in 1959 when Niger became a one-party state under the PPN;

- the *Parti Social Démocrate Nigérien* (PSDN-Alheri), another social democratic party with similar views to that of the CDS; and

- the *Union pour la Démocratie et le Progrès Social* (UDPS-Amana), a centrist party which draws its membership almost exclusively from the Tuareg people. The Tuaregs are a traditionally nomadic ethnic group that constitutes about 8 percent of the population and is concentrated in the north and west of the country.

## **Civic Organizations**

There are six major civic groups, many of them with overlapping memberships. Although all are based in Niamey, some of these organizations have branches in the country's major urban areas. In recent years, their activities have included promoting the rights and responsibilities of citizens in a democracy and denouncing violations of due process related to the Tuareg uprising. During the 1993 elections, about 30 representatives from these groups participated in election monitoring efforts that were coordinated by NDI and the UNDP. These civic organizations recently played an active role in mediating differences between the ruling and opposition parties in Niger; and worked hard to harmonize their activities with respect to active participation in monitoring all aspects of the election. They include:

- *Le Groupe d'Etudes et de Recherche sur la Démocratie et le Développement Economique et Social* (Gerddes - Niger). Gerddes-Niger is the country chapter of Gerddes-Afrique which is a regional NGO dedicated to fostering democratic principles and practices throughout Africa;

- the *Association des Femmes Juristes du Niger* (AFJN). The AFJN is interested in providing legal services to Nigerien women and assuring that they are treated equally under the law. AFJN conducts educational campaigns through radio announcements and short television sketches aimed at increasing the turn out of female voters and increasing the participation of women in the political process;

- the *Ligue Nigerienne de Defense des Droits de l'Homme, Garkuar Dan Adam* (LNDH). The LNDH campaigns regularly against human rights abuses throughout the country and occasionally publishes newspapers and magazines;

- the *Réseau d'Intégration et de Diffusion du Droit en Milieu Rural* (RIDD-FITILA). Founded by a law professor at the University of Niamey, this group conducts workshops, clinics and seminars to teach civics to citizens in the rural areas. It also works to improve the plight of Nigerien women. The group sponsors weekly radio broadcasts on basic civics in the languages of all three of Niger's principle ethnic groups (Hausa, Djerma and Peul);

- the *Association Nigerienne de Defense des Droits de l'Homme* (ANDDH). Led by a professor at the University of Niamey, ANDDH took a leading role in drafting and negotiating a compromise between the government and opposition parties on the status of the election commission. The group is recognized on both sides of the Nigerien political spectrum as being an impartial facilitator interested in promoting transparency in the political process; and

- *Démocratie, Liberté Développement* (DLD). The DLD is another grassroots civic group led by a professor at the University of Niamey.

### III. OBJECTIVES

NDI sought to achieve the following objectives through its election related training program in Niger:

- to train and provide technical advice to civic organization monitors, political party poll watchers and election commission officials on their respective roles in the election process;
- to enhance public confidence in the electoral process by facilitating cooperation among the political parties, governmental and non-governmental institutions working towards the same goal;
- to reinforce the role of domestic civic organizations in emerging democracies and to help expand their organizational and outreach capabilities;
- to assist Nigeriens in evaluating the election process in order to assess the legitimacy of the elections; and
- to train Nigerien NGOs on how to coordinate the domestic observer effort by harmonizing working methodologies and pooling available resources as a means of limiting the risks of inconsistent assessments and avoiding the duplication of efforts.

NDI conducted the seminar with the hope that Nigerien NGOs could apply the skills learned in other areas. NDI recognizes the important contribution of civic organizations in helping promote democratic behavior by offering more opportunities for participation in the political process of a country at all levels. For example, by offering ordinary citizens at the grass-roots level the opportunity to lead and administer programs or monitor the political process, citizens can feel empowered. These civic organizations in emerging democracies help buttress nascent political institutions. Non-partisan organizations can also play a useful role in building associations across ethnic or parochial lines so that attitudes of greater trust, tolerance and mutual interest can eventually emerge.

NDI designed this program in a manner that allowed the Institute to associate Nigerien

civic organizations in all components of the program. For example, NDI relied on the six most active Nigerien NGOs to facilitate the recruitment of about 250 volunteers who attended the training seminars offered by the Institute and served as domestic monitors on election day. NDI also worked closely with the leaders of these civic organizations to design and implement the training seminars in Niamey as well as in Zinder and Tahoua.

As a means of enhancing the sustainability of its assistance, NDI expected that through this kind of collaboration, Nigerien civic organizations will develop the expertise, capacity and human resources to monitor all aspects of the democratic process, educate citizens and advocate for change more effectively.

#### **IV. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION**

##### **Seminar Planning and Organization**

NDI's experience in coordinating monitors for the 1993 elections in Niger was very useful in planning for the 1994/1995 election assistance mission. NDI was able to reproduce many of the same documents provided to observers in 1993 with few updates or revisions. These documents included: an observer's manual; observer checklists; and summary observer reports. NDI also prepared and distributed a verification sheet for political party pollwatchers and an adapted election administrator verification sheet which was borrowed from a similar training program conducted by NDI in the Central African Republic.

Because of time and resource limitations, NDI concentrated its efforts on training domestic monitors. The training sessions and seminar materials were designed to also address the needs of members of the National Election Commission and political party pollwatchers.

At every stage of planning for the seminar, NDI worked closely with representatives of the election commission and domestic civic groups. Two civic organization representatives and two election commission representatives attended each seminar planning session and worked with NDI trainers to coordinate and moderate joint plenary and workshop presentations.

During the planning stage, and in an effort to familiarize the international trainers with electoral and other political issues currently being discussed in Niger, NDI organized an informal roundtable discussion on pre-election preparations and the Nigerien political environment. The roundtable was attended by representatives of civic organizations, the election commission, political parties, the media and academics; and provided a preview of issues that were likely to be raised during the seminar itself.

##### **Seminar Activities**

Of the 105 participants in the Niamey conference, approximately 50 were members of civic groups, 30 were officials of the election commission and 25 represented the 15 political parties that contested seats. Given that few of the civic groups are well organized outside of the

capital (with the exception of Ridd-Fitila and ANDDH), a higher percentage of participants in the Zinder and Tahoua conferences were election commission representatives.

The three seminars in Niamey, Zinder and Tahoua were structured to keep large plenary sessions to a minimum in favor of small group discussions and interactive workshops. Plenary sessions during the morning of the **first day** included a short theoretical overview of election monitoring; lessons learned during the 1993 elections, presented by the president of Ridd-Fitila; and an overview of the Nigerien electoral code by the President of the National Election Commission. In these sessions, trainers emphasized in their presentations the importance of knowing the election law well and of scrupulously investigating any irregularities so that all reports are accurate, objective and verifiable. By discussing the lessons learned during the 1993 presidential and legislative elections, NDI tried to encourage an exchange of experiences among the participants in an effort to utilize any local expertise already developed. Many of the trainees had participated in monitoring missions during the previous elections.

During the afternoon sessions, Nigeriens were divided into three workshops organized to coincide with the specific roles of participants on election day: election commission members, political party delegates and civic group representatives. In each of these small group settings, two NDI international trainers and one Nigerien moderated the discussions on specific election day issues.

In the workshop for **members of the electoral commission**, issues covered included: general responsibilities of polling site officials; point-by-point examination of forms and other documentation that must be completed by polling site officials; potential issues of dispute in the electoral code; counting the ballots and tabulating results; and communications with party delegates and observers.

In the workshop for **non-partisan monitors**, issues covered included: pre-election observation, record-keeping, spotting attempted fraud, monitoring the activities of local officials at the polling site; insuring impartiality of observers as well as general responsibilities of polling site officials, point-by-point examination of forms and other documentation that must be completed by monitors; potential issues of dispute in the electoral code; counting the ballots and tabulating results and communicating with party delegates and polling officials at the polling site. These participants were encouraged to conduct follow-on training and received from NDI, copies of a form to be completed as they organized training sessions for additional observers. The forms which are still being collected by GERDDES and RIDD-FITILA will be forwarded to NDI and will allow the Institute to know exactly how many Nigeriens benefitted directly and indirectly from the training program.

In the workshop for **party delegates**, issues covered included: general responsibilities of polling site officials; point-by-point review of forms and other documentation that must be completed by polling site officials and political party delegates; potential issues of dispute in the electoral code; counting the ballots and tabulating results; communicating disputes to party headquarters; professional conduct; and documenting irregularities and potential fraud.



In each workshop, trainers spent some time discussing training techniques or different ways in which the participants themselves could present the most salient points to others. Participants regrouped briefly at the end of the day for a question and answer session on issues of general concern and to review matters that were not thoroughly discussed in the workshops.

The second day opened with a plenary session in which a representative of the election commission discussed a short guide prepared by the commission (and distributed to all participants) on the responsibilities of polling station officials. The guide, presented in outline form, included cite references to the section of the electoral code that provides relevant detail. The session also covered a two page verification sheet prepared by NDI for polling site officials. The rest of the day was spent in **simulation exercises** in which a mock election was conducted. Participants were assigned roles as polling site officials, voters, observers etc. Participants had to determine if the polling site was set up correctly, identify spoiled ballots, formulate detailed plans to investigate incidents, and transmit results to authorities. Two hours were set aside at the end of the day to evaluate the simulation exercise and to discuss any other issues that were not covered.

Handouts distributed during the course of the seminar included: copies of the Nigerian electoral code, an NDI-prepared manual for election monitors and copies of all documents used for the tabulation and transmission of results. Participants were also provided with separate summary checklists to be used by polling site administrators, party delegates and observers which served as simple reminders once they were at the site.

## **Election Observation**

Before undertaking the program, NDI reached an agreement with the resident UNDP representative and the Nigerian authorities to the fact that UNDP had primary responsibility for the coordination of the observation missions although NDI would informally support UNDP efforts in coordinating missions wherever feasible.

NDI conducted pre-election assessment consultations with election commission officials, leaders of major political parties and representatives of human rights and other civic organizations (See Annex). Through these meetings NDI was able to ascertain the campaign environment, monitor security concerns and evaluate the preparedness of election commission officials. NDI communicated this information to the UNDP. The information that was gathered was useful in permitting interested observers to evaluate the overall context of the election process rather than have them simply focus on election day activities.

While NDI conducted its pre-election assessment, UNDP hosted periodic meetings with sponsors of observer delegations in order to plan the organizational and logistical steps for coordinating the observation mission. NDI informally advised and assisted the UNDP in formulating the overall objectives and structure of the observer mission. The terms of reference for participants described the dual underlying objectives of the observation mission: to provide a well informed, credible assessment of the Niger elections and to profit from the efficiencies

of a division of labor.

Uncertainty on the date of the election and the difficulty of finding qualified observers during the Christmas holidays limited the number of international observers to approximately 50. Countries providing international observer delegations included Germany, Switzerland, France and Canada. Since NDI opted not to send an international delegation, the NDI representatives in Niger were accredited under the UNDP umbrella. Representatives of the U.S. mission conducted their own independent observation mission.

Whenever possible, international observers were paired with Nigeriens to maximize the use of scarce resources as well as to make it easier for international observers to take advantage of local expertise. In total, approximately 150 two-person teams were deployed, with each team visiting at least 4 polling sites. This enabled observers to visit about 10 percent of the 4,892 polling sites throughout the country.

Each delegation presented the UNDP with a list of names of its observers. The complete list was then sent to the election commission for accreditation. Once the number of available vehicles was determined, teams were sent to each of the eight departmental capitals. Upon arrival in the town that would serve as their base for election day, teams met with local officials to introduce the mission and to select a cross-section of polling sites to visit.

The UNDP, local civic groups, and those countries sending observer delegations agreed that a uniform statement on the conduct of the elections would be issued by a five-person monitoring committee composed of: a representative of the Organization of African Unity; a representative of the Francophonie; a representative of GERDDES-Niger; a representative of RDFN, a women's civic group; and a representative of the Election Commission.

NDI strongly endorsed the principles behind the coordinated observation mission, but the team was surprised that the UNDP insisted upon discarding observation checklists drafted by NDI and used successfully in Niger during the 1993 elections, in favor of a derivative of the standard observation checklist used by the UN. Completing the form involved filling in a series of circles according to what was observed during a particular visit to a polling site. This form, similar in format to those used in American standardized tests, was not immediately understood by many of the Nigerien observers.

## **V. EVALUATION**

After each of the three seminars, a questionnaire was distributed for the purpose of evaluating the program. Fourteen questions were asked concerning different aspects of the seminar. A total of 192 questionnaires were completed and returned. There were 55 respondents in Niamey, 61 respondents in Tahoua and 76 respondents in Zinder. Most of the questions were open ended, allowing the respondent to provide as detailed an answer as he/she wished. However, one question was asked which required the respondent to provide an overall rating of the seminar on a scale from 1 to 10.

From these questionnaires NDI found that participants were generally pleased with the outcome of the three seminars. For example, an average score of 8.2 was received for all three seminars on the rating scale; with 4 being the lowest score given and 10 the highest. Nearly all participants were satisfied with the overall preparations of the seminar but some suggested that efforts could be made to conduct future seminars in the national languages of Niger. The participants found the documents distributed to be very useful and provided some suggestions for documents that could be distributed in future programs. These materials included: a schematic drawing of the layout of a typical polling station; the rules of procedure of the National Election Commission and any related directives on its composition; the Constitution of Niger; and a film simulating the operations of a polling station. Respondents overwhelmingly expressed interest in the simulation of election day operations in a polling station and seemed to prefer the smaller workshops to the plenary sessions.

Respondents were asked to mention any difficulties they experienced during the course of the seminar. The three most common answers provided in order of frequency were: transportation, lodging, and the lead time between the seminar and the elections. In fact, many respondents reiterated that they wished more time could have been devoted to the seminar and more detail provided.

The NDI team was pleased to see the level of female participation in the Niamey seminar. However, the activism and involvement of educated women in the capitol city contrasted sharply with the situation in the countryside where only two women attended the seminar in Zinder and one in Tahoua. Reports from some of the faculty members are attached.

## **VI. RECOMMENDATIONS AND OBSERVATIONS**

In accordance with the Constitution, Niger was obligated to conduct new elections within 90 days of the parliament's dissolution. Due to the limited amount of lead time available to plan and formulate this program, the first NDI staff arrived in the country a week before the first seminar was scheduled to begin. Within a week of receiving funding for the program, NDI had a field representative on the ground in Niamey meeting with representatives of the election commission and civic groups and making the necessary logistical arrangements. It would have been preferable to have more time in the country to prepare for the three training programs.

Planning and conducting three seminars - including two held in remote regions of the country - for over 250 participants poses a considerable number of logistical hurdles. The timing of the legislative elections meant that the seminars had to be scheduled during the holidays. Efforts to keep the operation at low costs meant a limited level of staff involvement in Niger. Given these constraints, NDI was forced to conduct the program without a logistics team in country. This took an inordinate amount of time from the program staff. With more staff members on the ground to divide responsibilities, the overall organization of the program would have been enhanced.

NDI has built a reputation in Niger for impartial electoral expertise and top notch

organizational skills as a result of the Institute's involvement in the 1993 legislative and presidential elections. Consequently, the National Election Commission seemed to be expecting NDI to take a larger role in organizing and overseeing the elections. For example, during initial meetings with the election commission, it seemed as though they assumed the Institute would be able to provide financial resources needed to solve pressing logistical problems, such as the distribution of election-related materials.

Some persons within the UNDP and the donor community also appeared confused over the specific goals of the NDI program. They expected that the NDI seminars would be principally designed for the benefit of the election commission and others responsible for administering the elections, as opposed to civic groups and political party pollwatchers. Although this issue was later resolved, it did lead to some initial confusion and tension, as well as some last minute programming changes. In reviewing comments received at the end of the seminars, all parties involved in the program, including the Election Commission, political parties, civic organizations, UNDP and other members of the donor community; seemed genuinely satisfied with NDI's program and its contribution to the successful conduct of the election.

## **VII. FUTURE PROGRAMMING**

The U.S. Embassy in Niamey, among other observers, seemed to be genuinely pleased with the structure and outcome of the NDI seminars and credit NDI in part for the relatively smooth administration of the elections. There is some interest in seeing NDI more involved in Niger's political process in the future. Suggestions were made of several areas where NDI could play a constructive role in helping to keep Niger on the democratic path.

In the area of civic education, GERDDES-Niger and a Nigerien educational curriculum development group called INDRAP have submitted separate proposals to the US Embassy for funding a democracy/civic education program for the schools. The Embassy has said they are interested but has asked both groups to consolidate their resources and work together on the project. The Embassy has also mentioned that it is particularly interested in working with women's advocacy groups such as the Association of Women Jurists.

As the number and strength of civic groups grow in Niger, there is growing interest and awareness of the importance of informing Nigeriens, particularly women and other sectors of society who have faced discrimination in the past, of their legal rights and responsibilities. There is also a growing recognition of the watchdog role civic groups can play to guard against the abuse of state authority on the one hand and to enhance government accountability on the other. However, Niger's civic groups are still managed with limited outreach skills, resource control and long term planning. NDI could play a constructive role, therefore, in strengthening local civic groups through more traditional capacity building programs. In addition, after two successful elections in which domestic civic organizations have been fully involved, advocacy training vis à vis the newly elected parliament could be very useful.