



# CIVIC UPDATE

May 2011



A Publication of the Citizen Participation Team

## Organizational Development

NDI's citizen participation approach generally involves partnering with local civic groups to help them undertake organized political actions, such as civic and voter education activities, issue advocacy campaigns, political-process monitoring initiatives, and community organizing efforts. NDI's assistance will periodically include organizational development, so that the groups can maintain an organizational base for their activism.

It should be noted, however, that not all political organizing requires a formalized organization. Citizens can come together on an ad-hoc bases to take collective political actions without being members of a "registered" civic organization. On the other hand, there are times when formal organizations are needed and organizational development can help ensure long-lasting success.

Organizational development (OD) is a planned, holistic effort to increase organizational effectiveness and sustainability. Because an organization is a living organism, all of its systems, functions and resources are interconnected. Therefore, all aspects of an organization must be considered for purposeful development to occur. A successful OD process will leave an organization better able to perform and grow. NDI's work in this area is specifically designed to help groups reach their potential as a recognized, responsible, accountable and ethical political actors. Organizational development is necessarily about creating change.

Successful organizational development is an endogenous process requiring a great deal of organizational leadership and ownership. Although NDI can play a facilitating role, the success of any organizational development effort will depend on the commitment demonstrated within the organization – a pre-existing amount of leadership "raw material" is essential if NDI's assistance it going to be absorbed. NDI also recognizes that organizational development is an action-oriented process, whereby change is directly related to the group's actions and ability to institutionalize learning.

Generally speaking, an organizational development process will place an emphasis, to varying degrees, on the organization's purpose, structures, human resources, internal political dynamics, and values. Different organizations will place greater emphasis on one dimension or another. For example, work with a coalition might emphasize the political dynamics and structural implications of the groups acting in unison, rather than a specific human resource concern.

In every case, the systematic and systemic process of organizational development includes multiple steps: structuring a partnership with the local group; jointly assessing the needs; providing feedback; planning the development interventions; providing assistance; reflecting with the group on progress; and exiting the relationship. NDI delivers this type of assistance either through programs primarily focused on organizational development or through programs focused on supporting partner activities, while also integrating organizational development. Regardless of the Institute's approach to the assistance, its role should be time-bound and result in an organization with the capacity to move forward with relatively little assistance.

NDI typically engages in two types of organizational development. The first focuses on helping build new organizations from the ground up. The second deals with supporting existing organizations as they seek to change some aspect of their business. Although the overall objective might be the same, the considerations and interventions will be somewhat different for each case. For example, building a new organization would typically address an organization's mission and strategic approach. When working to strengthen an existing organization, however, there would be a need to assess the group's current performance in light of its mission and strategic approach.

This issue provides insight into organizational development assistance that is designed to build new organizations and help established groups manage change. For more information, please contact NDI's Citizen Participation Team at [Civic\\_DC@NDI.org](mailto:Civic_DC@NDI.org)

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## Defining and Structuring a Partnership

NDI strives to build “intimate” developmental partnerships with local organizations to ensure that NDI’s assistance is desired, appreciated and applied. The understanding is that NDI is providing assistance to enable the local partner to better carry out its self-determined mission and strategies.

Based on an assessment NDI’s relationships with eight local Romanian partners in 2005, the citizen participation team discovered that the groups characterized their relationship with NDI as a “friendship.” To these groups, friendship meant that NDI responded to their needs and concerns, provided honest advice and thoughtful guidance on their organizational development, and allowed them to make their own decisions. It also meant helping them understand when they made mistakes and raising their profile with other institutions. This reflects NDI’s preferred partnership dynamic.



NDI has also found that when developmental partnerships are clearly structured, and the respective roles and responsibilities are explicitly defined, the partnership is more likely to result in positive change. To formalize the structure of these relationships, NDI often uses memoranda of understanding (MoUs) to establish clarity and foster mutual accountability. Drafting an MoU can be a good starting point for NDI and its partner to have a productive, structured conversation about how NDI’s assistance will be delivered, received and implemented in a way that addresses the explicit needs of the partner. It ensures that both understand the purpose of the partnership and what can be expected.

Some questions to discuss when preparing the MoU include:

- What are the desired outcomes for each partner?
- What are each partners roles?
- What mix of assistance methods (e.g., technical or financial assistance) will be employed by NDI?
- How will progress be defined and measured?

While each of these does not need to be codified in the MoU, they should all be addressed in the discussions surrounding the partnership and MoU.

Sometimes NDI provides partners with subgrants to help ease a transition process, apply new knowledge and skills, or learn how to manage money. For example, subgrants can be used to help instill ethical and accountable financial management practices.

Financial assistance alone, however, does not foster organizational development. Although financial assistance can help organizations carry out more activities, this does not mean that they will perform better or in sustainable manner. Typically, other types of assistance are also needed to ensure the organization is growing and learning.

### Partnership Selection in Iraq

The Iraq team used a two-step process to select approximately 20 NGO partners across Iraq. First, NDI developed a list of criteria that each NGO must meet, including: transformational leadership, track record in issue area, citizen-centered orientation, and accurate understanding of the community and its problems. Second, staff and provincial coordinators on the Iraq team, in consultation with representatives from an international organization, identified the leading three to five NGOs in each province that comply with the criteria.

## Strengthening New Organizations

When strengthening nascent civil society organizations, NDI assistance helps groups establish sound organizational systems, structures and practices that are consistent with international standards for non-profit organizational excellence, and adapted to the local context. Initial organizational development interventions often focus on fundamental questions related to mission, vision, and values. Once an organization considers these factors, it can begin to establish the appropriate infrastructure.

Throughout the process, much of NDI's support is focused on the development of effective organizational practices that can become the basis for long-term growth and sustainability. Such practices are associated with decisionmaking, planning, communication and financial management. *Because it is very hard for organizations to change once a practice has been established, it is important that groups establish positive practices early in the life of the organization.* For example, it is hard to for organizations to move from exclusive to inclusive decisionmaking or from sporadic reporting to regular reporting.

### Raw Materials

Successful OD is an endogenous process requiring a great deal of organizational leadership and ownership. Although NDI can play a facilitating role, the success and sustainability of any organizational development effort will depend on the commitment to development demonstrated by the organization's founders.

In order to maximize the effectiveness of a partnership designed to build an organization, NDI works with citizens who have some pre-existing potential as changemakers. First and foremost, NDI seeks to work with partners who have a vision and desire assistance. Second, the emerging organization's leaders should have a reputation as doers with a demonstrated track record of action and a willingness to engage at a broader level. Finally, it is essential that the leaders have some basic capacity to absorb NDI's assistance and make the most of it.

### Topics to Address through OD

*Aspirations.* Initial organizational development interventions often focus on fundamental questions related to organizational aspirations – the driving force behind an organization. Aspirations collectively articulate an organization's sense of purpose and direction. Most often this will be expressed as the organization's mission, vision and overarching goals. These fundamental aspects of an organization should be clearly defined in succinct

statements of one or two sentences each. **Vision** is the over-riding principle that guides an organization. It defines what its leaders want the organization to be and the society or world it hopes to help create. The organization's **mission** is a formal, short, written statement of the organization's purpose. Finally, **goals** should be more precise in defining what success would actually look like.

*Strategies.* Strategies broadly outline how an organization will approach the fulfillment of its purpose. Will the organization focus on raising public awareness, mobilizing political actions, reporting on developments, conducting research, training others, or providing analysis and commentary.

*Culture.* Culture is the emotional tone and atmosphere of an organization and must be considered in the building stage as it will significantly guide behavior within the organization. Since culture develops through the interactions taking place within the organization, leaders need to consider how to foster and support the type of interactions that induce creativity, collaboration and reflection, for example.

*Structures, Policies and Procedures.* Once the organizational purpose and direction have been laid out, an organization can begin to establish the appropriate structures, policies, and procedures. Organizational structure defines the governance and management of the organization and also includes a delineation of specific roles and responsibilities between parts of the organization.

In addition to structuring how an organization functions, there is also the need for the development of explicit policies and procedures to help clarify expectations and establish routines that ensure the organization is working purposefully and in a responsible manner. Policies and procedures also guide decisionmaking and other actions within the organization.

*Human resources.* Human resources are the collective capabilities, experience, potential, and commitment of the organization's board, management, staff and volunteers. The human resource system starts with establishing clear job descriptions and lines of authority, and also includes developing appropriate pay structures, performance feedback procedures, and promotion opportunities.

*Staff Development.* In order to enhance the ability of the organization's staff to help achieve the organization's goals, the professional skills of all staff should be

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developed in a way that ensures efficient and effective collaboration. It is important to focus on skills that are the most valuable for the organization. Compare this to skillsets of the individuals forming the organization and this will help dictate what staff positions need to be filled, or what staff capacities need to be developed, to complement existing staff's weaknesses. Skills to consider include: strategic planning, marketing, fundraising, financial management, program evaluation, performance measurement, planning, resource management, and external relationship building.

## Assessing the Organizational Development

NDI and its partners should develop a plan for the organization to assess its procedures and processes on a regular basis. This will help to ensure the organization continues to build on its initial successes. For more information on organizational assessment see the managing change article.

## Managing Change

NDI's organizational development work with established organizations is designed to help the groups improve performance and take on a new challenge, like moving from domestic election observation into legislative monitoring. When helping groups manage change, NDI must first determine if the group is prepared to start a robust OD process. This means talking with a group's leadership about the need and desire to pursue new challenges and opportunities, as well as the type of changes that might be required within the organization.

Not all organizational change necessarily requires an OD process. Organizations change naturally over time as they grow and mature. NDI can help organizations under these circumstances by providing periodic guidance and technical assistance as needs arise.

An OD process, on the other hand, usually happens when an organization wants to make a pronounced shift in operations, or tackle an underlying issue that inhibits overall performance. Unlike other more natural changes processes, OD is planned and has specific objectives reflecting performance improvements.

Partners must have a strong desire to improve their performance and be ready to embark on a step-by-step process of assessment and development. OD assistance can be wasted when an organization does not have the time or willingness to focus on a purposeful improvement process. When they are ready, however, OD can help a group take the actions necessary to become more capable.

Once a group has indicated a willingness to improve performance or expand operations, NDI can begin to help the group reaffirm an overall mission and approach, and then target specific areas for development. This requires

### Goals of NDI's OD Partnership with FEFA of Afghanistan

NDI has been working with the Free and Fair Election Foundation of Afghanistan (FEFA), the country's principal domestic monitoring organization, since the group was formed in 2004. Currently, NDI and FEFA are collaborating on an organizational development program that seeks to improve the scope and professionalism of FEFA's observation work within and outside of the electoral process. In particular, FEFA is interested in improving its program management and administrative support as it seeks to expand into activities beyond election monitoring.

that every part of the organization be examined so that the partner can capitalize on its strengths and address weaknesses. Under all circumstances, NDI's role should be time-bound and result in an organization with the capacity to independently advance its mission in a professional and effective manner.

### Organizational Assessments

Once a group has decided that a change is needed, the OD process can move forward with an organizational assessment (OA). Through the assessment, NDI can help the partner identify strengths, weaknesses, resources, opportunities and specific areas for improvement. The OA also helps establish expectations for NDI and the partner,



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so both sides are on the same page.

An OA goes beyond examining program/project outputs and results. The organizational assessment also includes indicators about an organization's:

- Alignment of mission, values, vision and culture;
- Levels of Performance, including its efficacy and efficiency;
- Capacity, including leadership, human resources, physical resources, staff management and programming/process management; and
- The operating environment.

NDI staff should be cognizant of the sensitivities that might exist within a partner organization. The assessment should be framed as a means of helping the organization advance and build on past successes. This means that the assessment should also focus on the all the things that work well. The process should be participatory and involve a significant cross section of the organization.

Once the assessment is completed, the findings are used to create a development plan, that will include specific targets, timelines, methods and a delineation of responsibilities between NDI and members of the organization.

### Areas that might be addressed through OD

*Strategic Planning.* NDI's organizational development assistance can touch on a wide range of topics and areas within the partner CSO. One place that often get s lot of attention is the partner's strategic plan. This often means

### Tips for Handling an Assessment

- Respect the local context.
- Minimize the disruption caused by the OA.
- Stay on track, limiting your questions to those in the purview of the OA.
- Anticipate and understand negative reactions.
- Be adaptable yet disciplined about getting the information you need for your OA report.

## An Approach to an Organizational Assessment

The Iraq team is beginning an OD program to provide assistance to 5-7 local civil society organizations (CSOs). Since it would be difficult and expensive to conduct full organizational assessments of each of the 20+ prospective partners prior to selection, NDI has incorporated numerous questions that require self-assessment on the partnership application. It will use organizations' responses to these questions to select partners. Some of the questions include:

- To what extent is the CSO trying to solve the problems that hinder the country's democratic development?
- Describe the organization's accounting system.
- What objectives does the organization hope to achieve with a grant toward implementation of project activities? (The OD is a corollary to another program the CSO will be implementing, such as an advocacy campaign.)
- How will the organization measure the project's progress toward these objectives?

reviewing an existing strategic plan and revising it or creating one from scratch. Developing a strategic plan should help an organization clarify or establish its long-term goals and the strategic framework in which it will work. Because of a strategic plan's long-term implications for the organization and its work, the entire organization should be involved in some part of the process.

The strategic planning component of OD can start by evaluating the existing strategic plan, if one exists. The partner should assess what still applies and what needs to be rethought or reconfigured to address a new environment, new goals, new objectives or new approaches. Once a strategic plan has been created for the next few years, NDI should help the partner develop a framework and timeline for future review and revision of its strategic plan.

*Management.* Some aspects of management include how decisions are made, how staff are managed, how work is delegated, how and when deadlines are set, internal communication procedures, staff performance evaluations

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and incentive or rewards structures. The approaches to these management issues set the culture and tone of the organization. A partner organization's leadership should consider how they may want their organization's culture to change (e.g., become more professional or become more fun so people enjoy being at work more) and set up procedures that foster that culture.

The management practices that worked for the organization when it was just the two founders with no support staff may not work as well when the organization has 20 additional staff members. As the number of staff and/or the quantity of projects the staff are responsible for increase, personnel management should adapt. Procedures and decisionmaking structures for personnel management may need to be modified to accommodate additional layers in the organization's hierarchy or simply to recognize that more people need to be informed about decisions. Modifying the levels and structure of the organization is an option, possibly dividing people or projects into departments to decentralize leadership and management, taking some of the more routine tasks off the shoulders of the executive director.

In addition to reflecting on an organization's relationships with its own staff members, the OD process can also look at its relationship with any coalitions or networks to which the organization belongs and how the organization could better contribute to or get what it needs from that group. On the other hand, if the organization is not currently a part of a larger group, part of the OD process can involve considering whether a broader coalition could better help the organization achieve its mission or further its goals.

*Communication.* The two sides of communication – internal and external – are often key components of an organization's success. Good internal communication keeps an organization cohesive and helps everyone feel like they're part of the team. If employees are uninformed about the work of other parts of their organization, they may be less motivated to do their job or less *able* to do their job. In addition to examining the partner's internal communication procedures and improving its quality for the long-term, internal communication is especially critical *during* the organizational development process. Keeping employees aware of what changes are being made and what is expected of them will help alleviate their natural resistance to change. Bringing them into the process the whole way through will help them be more comfortable with it and more likely to implement its recommendations.

External communications range from how the organization

talks with its members, volunteers and donors to its media relations. Having someone who is in charge of defining the message for each project (e.g., sending out talking points to staff for conversations with volunteers) or event (e.g., making sure everyone knows what time the event begins) can help ensure that all the staff are on the same page and are giving accurate, consistent information to everyone outside of the organization. If the organization is receiving, or would like to receive, substantial media coverage, it may want to designate a point person or team to handle media relations. That person or team can then develop relationships with the local or national media outlets, which is a great strategy for getting better coverage. It is helpful for the media to know who to call to get accurate information or to get a comment for a story that relates to the organization's work.

### Focus Areas of NDI's OD Assistance to FEFA

To begin its assistance to FEFA, NDI reviewed the group's capacity in several areas, including: internal management, donor relations, communications and maintenance of its member and partnership network. In its upcoming OD assistance in Iraq as well as its current work with FEFA in Afghanistan, NDI's support falls into two categories – technical advice and financial assistance. NDI's technical support to FEFA concentrates on strategic planning, organizational management, administrative procedures, reporting structures and fundraising.

Some of the partner's new projects and programs may require volunteer assistance. To maximize this help, the organization can consider developing its public outreach and implementing systems to recruit and manage volunteers. Engaged volunteers are a great resource – they can take some of the administrative burden off the staff's shoulders by answering phones, preparing mailings, calling people to invite them to events, etc. However, to ensure that they come back and continue to support the organization, they must be valued, managed well and appreciated. Even if the organization is not actively seeking volunteers, sometimes supporters may offer to help. A plan should be in place to keep track of and take advantage of those offers in a way that shows people their support is appreciated.

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**Fundraising.** Scaling up and improving an organization often requires more money, which makes fundraising another OD consideration. If the organization is planning on ramping up a new project or program or needs additional staff to improve what it is already doing, it probably needs to raise more money to cover these expenses. Also, if the partner has been dependent upon NDI subgrants or other assistance and needs to transition to other means of financing its work, the organization should start exploring alternative external funding sources. In addition to helping the partner identify new potential donors, a few longer-term strategies and tactics that the OD process can identify and explore are building relationships and networking, how to solicit donations (i.e., how to make the ask), writing grant proposals, thanking donors and maintaining relationships. An organization should not only write to donors (or potential donors) to ask for money, but to also communicate with donors between grants to let them know how things are going. Communications in between requests for donations, like newsletters or e-mail updates, keep donors involved and interested in the organization and its work.

**Financial Management.** Before the money can be granted, the groups needs to make sure it has the financial management and accounting capabilities. New donors may have specific reporting requirements or standards,

requiring the organization to develop or improve its capacity in that area. On the whole, the partner should work to ensure that the principles of transparency and accountability underlie its accounting and financial practices. In addition to this being a best practice, the partner should practice what it preaches – it will lose credibility if it is pressing the government to improve its budget transparency, but it is discovered that the groups itself cannot account for a sizable chunk of its own money. A CSO is accountable not only to its donors but also to its members, volunteers and community members. Instilling an ethical and responsible approach to financial management organization-wide may be especially practical if NDI provides the partner with a subgrant as part of its assistance package. If this is the case, NDI can build upon the subgrants team’s initial training of the group to encourage the partner to apply those standards (and the spirit of them) to all of their work.

A good starting point for establishing ethical, sustainable financial management practices is to create an accounting policies and procedures manual. All accounting procedures should be written with international and local standards in mind. Written policies and procedures should be circulated widely throughout the entire organization so that all staff know the standards they will be held to.



## Methods of Assistance and Implementation

NDI recognizes that organizational development is an action-oriented process, whereby development is directly related to the actions and learning undertaken by the partner. Throughout the development process, it is important to remember that organizations are made up of diverse people, who learn in different ways and from different methods. For this reason, there are a variety of factors that can determine the approach NDI uses when assisting in the development of organizations. These include, but are not limited to,:

- Considering the needs and capacity of the target audience;
- The organizational and management structure of the partner organization;
- Staff members who will be attending the trainings;
- The types of skills and information NDI will communicate; and
- The methods most conducive to the partner's staff remembering, processing, and being able to later implement the conveyed information.

### NDI's Approach to OD Assistance with SuNDE

NDI assisted SuNDE in defining its organizational structure and responsibilities and aided in the formulation of a strategic plan establishing a concrete set of activities that would allow SuNDE to achieve its mission and objectives. Over the course of its existence, SuNDE has successfully deployed voter education and domestic monitoring programs across all ten states in southern Sudan for the elections in both April 2010 and January 2011.

There are several main tools NDI uses to deliver OD assistance, including:

- Conducting trainings or workshops – through workshops and group sessions, NDI staff or consultants teach participants the knowledge, skills, and attitude that are needed to fill the gap between what people want to do and what they are currently able to do. Trainings can be conducted by NDI directly with the organization or through trainings of trainers. Training-of-trainer interventions involve not only

content training but teaching the trainers how to facilitate and teach others. "Learning by doing" is an excellent method to teach a trainer how to be effective.

- Experiential or process- led activities - enable the successful transfer of information to people who learn best by doing or for certain types of activities (e.g., budgeting) that may require people to work with the material to recall and be able to replicate the processes.
- Coaching or mentoring – a self-reflective process facilitated by an external coach on a regular basis (e.g., weekly) in which day-to-day experiences are drawn on as learning opportunities, and where options are explored or choices identified. Mentoring is when a long-term relationship is developed with a senior or experienced colleague, geared to the provision of support and guidance.
- Consultations and one-on-one troubleshooting – used as a tool when NDI would like to make itself available when problems arise, in order to help partners think through the situation, brainstorm solutions, or talk over alternative approaches after-the-fact.





## Suggested Reading

*“Learning Purposefully in Capacity Development: Why, What and When to Measure?”* is an opinion paper prepared for IIEP by Alfredo Ortiz and Peter Taylor presenting methods for promoting long-term, sustainable capacity development. The paper explores predominant ways of thinking about monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and how it can be utilized to capture capacity development. While organizational development and capacity building are different (organization development is more holistic in its approach), this article offers useful M&E mechanisms for NDI staff working on organizational development projects.

The piece starts by presenting the question: “What should monitoring and evaluation tell us about capacity development?” and highlights the benefits a good M&E structure can have on the organizational development process. The first section of the paper explores what M&E programs should evaluate in an organizational development program. Building on this, section two - “What we can learn from the dilemmas of the M&E of capacity development” – discusses how robust M&E programs designed to facilitate the learning approach can yield better results over the long term. Finally, the conclusion presents the benefits of designing a theory of change (an organization’s understanding of how development happens with regard to its mission) prior to



designing effective capacity building and M&E programs.

This reading will assist NDI and its partners to design M&E programs to measure the success of organizational development programs.

You can find this article on the portal at: [http://portal2009.ndi.org/c/document\\_library/get\\_file?p\\_l\\_id=10127&groupId=41122&folderId=337003&name=DLFE-10868.pdf](http://portal2009.ndi.org/c/document_library/get_file?p_l_id=10127&groupId=41122&folderId=337003&name=DLFE-10868.pdf)



## CP Team Update

The Citizen Participation team's Senior Program Assistant Lacey Kohlmoos left the team in early April to spend a few months exploring Nepal and supporting the activism of a women's organization in India before heading back stateside to work in domestic organizing and advocacy. The team's two Project Assistants, Leilani Greene and Rosemarie Clouston, are also leaving us this month to pursue other adventures and finish their respective Masters degrees. But we have two great new additions as well – Kent Fogg from the CEE team will be sharing time between the two teams and Sharin Lazich has joined us as a Project Assistant for the summer.

Kent will be helping the team with some materials development and keeping our portal page updated, among other things. As you may know, Kent joined NDI in June 2010 as a Program Assistant on the CEE team after graduating from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. He has been working on the Montenegro and Macedonia programs, including some time in Podgorica assisting with the closeout of the Montenegro office. Prior to his graduate studies, Kent spent time in the Balkans as a volunteer for a local NGO in Bosnia, an intern at the U.S. Embassy in Belgrade, and a high school teacher in Serbia. He also worked briefly at the Woodrow Wilson Center here in DC and at the International Centre for Black Sea Studies in Athens, Greece. A native of Richmond, Virginia, he has also volunteered for several election campaigns. Kent speaks Serbian, Spanish, and German.

Sharon Lazich is a native Chicagoan, yet world traveler. She graduated from Benedictine University in Lisle, Illinois, with degrees in Political Science and Spanish Literature. She then moved to Costa Rica to work as an English teacher. Sharon travelled to Ukraine as a Peace Corps volunteer working at a local school and collaborated with the Ukrainian Ministry of Education on various projects. She is currently a student at Georgetown's School of Foreign Service in the Center for Latin American Studies, concentrating on democratization, especially political parties and civil society. Sharon speaks Spanish and a mix of Russian and Ukrainian.

NDI recently produced "Political-Process Monitoring: Activist Tools and Techniques" that deals specifically with legislative monitoring, budget monitoring and expenditure tracking, shadow reporting, campaign-related monitoring, and monitoring government follow-through. The guide provides case studies, program design frameworks, implementation suggestions, and tools and templates for use by development practitioners and local monitoring groups.

NDI recognizes, however, that questions remain about the development outcomes resulting from political-process monitoring and how such outcomes can be measured. To address these questions, NDI is presently preparing a companion toolkit to assist development practitioners with evaluating these types of programs. The toolkit will describe the impact monitoring can likely have on citizen voice, political space and government accountability. It will also provide practical indicators and suggest potential ways to measure the impact. This follow-on piece will be available later this year. If you would like a copy of "Political-Process Monitoring: Activist Tools and Techniques," see Kourtney Pompei.

### ***Civic Update***

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NDI's Citizen Participation  
Team.

Please send comments  
or suggestions to  
Kent Fogg at  
kfogg@ndi.org

### **Editors**

Aaron Azelton  
Kent Fogg  
Lacey Kohlmoos  
Kourtney Pompei

### **Writers**

Aaron Azelton  
Leilani Greene  
Lacey Kohlmoos  
Rosemarie Clouston

### **Layout and Design**

Rosemarie Clouston

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