

Issue 2, 4/15/97



Welcome to the second issue of the Civic Update!! This issue concentrates on the theme 'ADVOCACY.' Thanks to everyone who submitted comments and thoughts on the February Civic Update and the 'Advocacy: Are We Speaking the Same Language?' memo. We received lots of good information and thoughtful comments, which have been put together in a revised memo defining the term advocacy and NDI's work in this area. (See attached memo: 'Advocacy: Let's Speak the Same Language.')

As you know, NDI civic programs help strengthen the participation of individuals and nongovernmental organizations, who serve as intermediaries between citizens and their government, in political processes. The Civic Update is a periodic news bulletin designed to exchange information among NDI staff on different aspects of civic participation programs. It is intended to inform NDI staff of activities in this area and to raise issues confronted by staff working on civic programs. The "Civic Notes," which follow the brief explanations of programs, are used to highlight specific program issues, provide ideas or suggestions for programs or raise awareness of materials available. We hope that it will be helpful. Please send us your comments and suggestions by E-mail at lisam@ndi.org or kelsch@ndi.org; mail or fax. Thanks! (*This is an internal news update. Please do not distribute it to non-NDI colleagues.*)

What's Up Around the World in Assisting NGOs¹ to Do Advocacy Work?

Cambodia—Partner NGOs Advocate on New Electoral Legislation

In preparation for the 1998 national elections, NDI is carrying out a program to support Cambodian NGOs in their election-related efforts. The program includes voter education, election monitor training, cooperative agreements and institutional development consultations with partner organizations. Recently, one of NDI's partner organizations, the Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia (COMFREL), obtained a copy of the commune-level draft election law that outlined the composition of a national election commission. Given the proposed composition and structure, COMFREL feared that the new board would lack political independence and therefore, credibility in future electoral processes. With NDI's assistance, COMFREL drafted an alternative proposal to establish an independent election commission and organized a seminar on "The Importance of Establishing a Neutral Independent Election Commission." The seminar helped open the discussion on the current draft election law and allowed

¹ "The term nongovernmental organization or NGO is used to describe organizations which are not a part of - are independent of - the government." What Is An NGO? Basic Concept Of Nonprofit Organizations, prepared by Emily Gantz Mc Kay, President, MOSAICA, 1994.

COMFREL to present an alternative board composition that would help ensure a more independent election commission. COMFREL also plans to incorporate suggestions made at the seminar and will ultimately submit their version of a law as proposed legislation to the National Assembly.

Civic Note: In addition to providing funding for the conference, the NDI team helped increase the capacity of COMFREL to advocate for a more independent election commission and enabled them to create definitive suggestions as to how an independent commission could be established.

NDI field team members Peter Manikas and Brenda Pearson researched election laws and the composition of election commissions from other countries and also provided comments on the draft legislation.

They produced two documents: Establishing Election Authorities: A Comparative Review and Commentary on the Draft Law on the Election of the Chiefs of the Communes and Quarters. This information allowed COMFREL to become more knowledgeable about how various countries have ensured the independence of election authorities through establishing a multi-partisan commission, providing for separate budgetary authority and a variety of other measures. (For information or copies of the documents, contact Sophie Richardson of the Asia team in DC.)

Namibia—Providing Skills to Enable NGOs to Participate in the Legislative Process

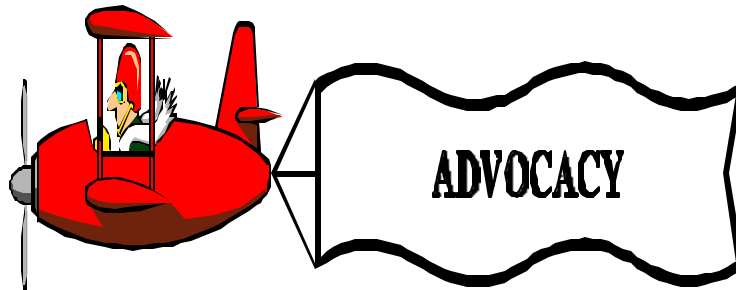
NDI has a three-year program in Namibia to strengthen the Parliament by encouraging

greater public participation in the legislative process and making transparency, accountability and responsiveness a top concern to members of Parliament and staff. As part of the program, NDI provides local groups with cooperative agreements to conduct advocacy projects. NDI-Namibia works with the philosophy that supporting nongovernmental organizations and their efforts to conduct advocacy-related programs is critical to giving community groups and key NGOs the power to keep pace with government. Currently, NDI sponsors the Namibia Non-governmental Organisation's Forum (NANGOF), an umbrella body of 60 organizations, in disseminating information,

facilitating NGO consultations on current policy decisions and helping civic coalitions make contributions on key legislative debates. In the u p c o m i n g

months, NANGOF will facilitate training for interested NGOs in advocacy, lobbying skills and applied research methodologies. NDI is also considering a number of proposals from other local groups.

Civic Note: Relationship building is a key aspect in becoming an effective advocate. With this in mind, NDI initiated its NGO activities by consulting widely with the nongovernmental community and other relevant institutions. Then, NDI-Namibia, together with local groups, sponsored a nationwide conference on advocacy. This forum created the opportunity for local organizations to interact with Members of Parliament and to discuss how the public (represented by NGOs) can build a relationship with the government to carry out



advocacy programs. The workshop helped foster constructive relationships between government and NGO leaders. Since then, the Urban Trust (an indigenous nongovernmental organization), for example, has been identified by the Ministry of Housing as a potential partner in implementing the decentralization program. (For information, contact Eric Happel of the South Africa team in DC.)

Romania—Assistance to Local NGOs to Conduct Advocacy Campaigns

In June 1995, NDI began a three-year cooperative agreement with World Learning. The program proposes to increase indigenous NGOs' influence on public policy. Even though there is a large NGO community in Romania, the groups typically have not developed strategies to advocate for their issues of concern nor defined ways to influence public policy. NDI field representative Michelle Rydz started her work by conducting a comprehensive nationwide assessment of existing advocacy work among Romanian NGOs. Based on her findings, she designed a program to develop the organizational capacity of the local groups and to provide them with the skills to initiate advocacy campaigns. Topics covered include: volunteer and membership development, message creation and strategic press/media campaigns. Additionally, discussions review institutional development issues such as project planning, proposal writing and fundraising. The NDI office also serves as a resource to the NGOs by providing a meeting room and a library with organizational development and advocacy information.

Civic Note: Through her work, Michelle found that it was necessary to define advocacy and 'public policy' at the onset of the workshops since these concepts were often new to the NGOs. After being introduced to advocacy,

participants often realized that they had influenced, or attempted to influence, public policy by using advocacy techniques. The NDI training also exposes the participants to new concepts that help them in preparing for future advocacy campaigns. Michelle highlights the importance of focusing on the process of advocacy campaigns. As Michelle says, "The process is as important as the winning. Of course you always want to win but, the process of the campaign can strengthen your organization by adding members, developing your reputation and preparing you for your next campaign." (For more information or a copy of the initial assessment report, contact Matthew Joyce of the Central and Eastern European team in DC.)



Russia—Cooperative Advocacy Strategies: Political Parties and Civic Groups

In Russia, little communication or interaction traditionally takes place between political parties and civic organizations. Political parties do not see the benefit of civic expertise on social issues and civic leaders shy away from any cooperation with political parties. One political party with which NDI has worked, Democratic Choice of Russia (DCR), recently recognized the potential benefit of such a relationship and inquired about ways to provide their party activists with the skills to interact with civic community leaders. In response to this idea, NDI conducted a workshop with DCR and civic representatives under the theme of cooperation on advocacy campaigns of mutual interest. The value of cooperation was demonstrated with a role play exercise in which political and civic activists worked together to outline real issue campaign plans. (At least one plan will be put into

action in the near future.) The program also offered the opportunity to learn skills such as: how combining resources and contacts leads to stronger efforts; how each sector possesses different expertise to contribute to an issue campaign; and how the cooperation of a few from both sectors can lead to pragmatic and important plans with results that could help both sides. This workshop was the first in hopefully a series of programs of this type.

Civic Note: While the main goal of the program was to develop cooperation between the political parties and civic groups on issue campaigns, this workshop introduces one way to hit home some advocacy concepts and elements of developing an advocacy campaign. Once an issue is defined and your goal clarified, how do you get there??? A strategy includes identifying potential partners, understanding your opponents and selecting tactics. The program provided training on advocacy and also challenged the civic groups to think about the way they advocate for an issue. It also led civic representatives to look at the following types of questions in a new light: *Who are my partners in an advocacy campaign? When is it, or would it be, beneficial for me to ally with a political party or several political parties? What relationship should I have with the political parties and other civic groups? What are the potential hazards of cooperating with a political party on an advocacy campaign and how can I protect myself against such potential problems? (For more information, contact Laura Jewett of the FSU team in DC.)*



OTHER NDI ADVOCACY PROGRAMS:

I apologize for not being able to thoroughly describe and analyze all advocacy programs as I did above. *All* other current or upcoming advocacy programs, or programs that have an advocacy component, are briefly summarized below.

Central and Eastern Europe

Regional Program: In May, NDI will be conducting regional advocacy workshops (one in Macedonia and the other in Hungary) to build the capacity of NGOs in the region so that they may actively participate in the democratic process. Workshops will bring together participants from a number of countries in the region to address advocacy and the basic organizing skills needed for implementing an advocacy campaign. Another goal of the regional workshops is to create a network of civic organizers to exchange expertise and ideas on an ongoing basis.

Slovakia: NDI's program focuses on developing and strengthening coalitions of community groups and training local community organizers to understand power so that they can help others to solve community problems and, when necessary, advocate. An integral aspect of this program is to assist NGO coalitions in the development of issue-based campaigns that would appeal to citizens and generate a sense of ownership and participation in the political process. Advocacy initiatives often occur as part of this program, but are not necessarily the primary or necessary objectives.

Bosnia: NDI will soon be initiating advocacy workshops for participants from organizations or associations who participate in NDI's Civic Forum program. The current civic education program helps to raise citizen understanding of democracy and the Bosnian transition process through small group discussions in which participants practice democracy using group processes.

Former Soviet Union:

The Baltic States: NDI conducts an advocacy program in the three Baltic States. At the initial stages of the program, NDI field staff realized that a focus was required on institutional strengthening issues such as, mission, fundraising and membership before one could address 'advocacy' issues, such as, defining your issue, identifying allies and opponents and working with the media. Recent training of Latvian NGOs addressed strategies for developing coalitions in order to increase their visibility and effectiveness.

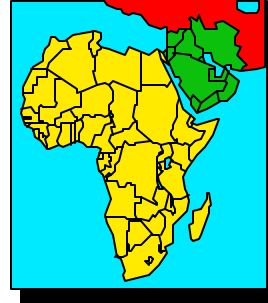
Ukraine: NDI has a multifaceted program to strengthen Ukrainian democracy. One component of the program is to help build the capacity of local NGOs, including the domestic monitoring group with which NDI works, to carry out advocacy initiatives. Periodic advocacy training workshops and consultation are held. Topics covered include: lobbying strategies, coalition building, improving your organization's image, volunteer recruitment and leadership.

Kyrgyzstan: NDI's program encourages a more open and transparent Parliament and the active participation of local organizations in the public policy-making process. NDI conducts NGO advocacy training both inside and outside the capital. Training workshops have included topics such as: message development, parliamentary structure, and strategy planning on how local groups can include their views in discussion on draft NGO legislation.

Middle East

West Bank and Gaza Strip: NDI is conducting an assessment of NGOs in the West Bank and Gaza Strip to develop a more detailed plan that strengthens the capacity of civic organizations to access, monitor and influence the public policy-making process. The program will build on the experience and network of Palestinian organizations with

which NDI has worked over the past two years through the Civic Forum program and other activities.



East Africa

Ethiopia: NDI works with local groups on material development and civic education. A session on advocacy and strategies for citizen participation was conducted at a recent NDI-sponsored NGO workshop. At the requests of the groups, NDI plans to conduct a public interest advocacy conference for civic organizations in the fall of 1997.

West Africa

Cote d'Ivoire: An NDI proposal was recently approved to strengthen a coalition of democracy and governance organizations in Cote d'Ivoire and increase their capacity to conduct effective advocacy work. Since information is an advocacy tool, NDI intends to connect the groups to Internet. NDI also plans to train the local groups on the use of new technology and capabilities to strengthen their advocacy work.

Southern Africa

Mozambique: Advocacy is one component of six themes discussed in training with local NGOs. Advocacy in this context is presented as a strategy that the groups can use to be more effective in their work. Based on past workshops, a film is being produced to capture the stories of Mozambican NGOs who have successfully used strategies (including

advocacy strategies) to help build civil society in the country.

SEE ATTACHED LIST OF AVAILABLE ADVOCACY MATERIALS!!

Do you have, use or recommend advocacy-related materials that are not noted on the attached resource list? If so, please E-mail us and let us know or send us a copy in your next mailing to the Washington office.



YOUR CIVIC NOTE CORNER

Comments received from NDI staff will be included in each issue of the Civic Update. E-mail, fax or mail your comments to us

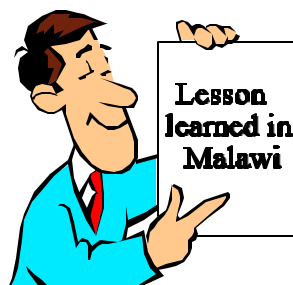
(lisam@ndi.org, kelsch@ndi.org) by **May 23**. YOU ARE THE EXPERTS, so let us hear from you!! A special THANKS to the following people for sending in their comments on advocacy: Michelle Rydz, David Sip, Robert Benjamin, Lynn Heller, Pero Nampila, and Nicole Seibel. (See attached memo 'Advocacy: Let's Speak the Same Language.')

THE NEXT CIVIC UPDATE - ISSUE 3

One Topic to be Covered: Effective Programs! (Shhhh, don't tell anyone but its also called evaluation:-)) How do you collect information to continually assess the effectiveness of your program? What about the structure of your program allows you to be able to assess it regularly? What techniques do you use that are incorporated into your program? For example, one of many techniques used in Mozambique is the creation and maintenance of a comprehensive training session database of workshop participants, their demographics and the type of training

they received. The NDI office updates this on a regular basis to maintain quantitative information on the program and assist in analyzing program outreach. I'm sure that each one of you utilizes creative ways to follow and continually assess the effectiveness of your program. PLEASE SEND IN ONE EXAMPLE OF YOUR OWN (again by May 23) and everyone will benefit!!

What's Worked???..... You've Tried it, Let's Hear About It! At the suggestion of Consuella Brown in Malawi, the Civic Updates will include this section to highlight examples of approaches people have found that have worked for them or approaches that they would not recommend. What would you recommend to your fellow staff members and what would you advise them against, and why? These kinds of "lessons learned" are extremely valuable for everyone.



Consuella tells us "I probably would not recommend putting Members of Parliament together with local NGOs at an advocacy skills building workshop."

Her story goes as follows:

"In December 1996, NDI Malawi sponsored an advocacy skills building workshop for women parliamentarians, women chiefs and representatives from women's organizations. The intent of the workshop was to try and assist each of the three groups with possible skills that would help them find more effective ways to lobby for legal reform in the area of wills and inheritance, marriage, divorce, citizenship and affiliation. There was lots of lively debate and an agreement to find ways to support each other. However, the mixing of the three groups together to discuss possible

strategies for advocating for the bills at the national assembly level was disastrous. Principally because the MPs did not know much about the content of the bills and they were the ones that would have to handle the debate in parliament and so rather than letting on that they did not understand what was in the bills they kept throwing out these fallacious responses to questions. The responses infuriated the NGO community and the rebuttals to the arguments seemed to agitate the chiefs. So by the time the workshop ended, the women parliamentarians were attacked for not soliciting the opinions of their various constituencies and the chiefs were attacking the NGOs for not adequately representing the views of civil society. But I guess the good news is that they actually were lobbying for what they believed in."

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**Produced by Kate Kelsch
with support from
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