



Civic Update

Issue 5, 3/05/98

"If you do not know where you are going, any road will take you there"

- Lewis Carroll, Alice in Wonderland

Welcome to the fifth issue of the Civic Update. This issue examines some methods being used by staff members to assess program performance regularly. Assessment basically involves collecting information about program activities, and then determining whether the activities have moved the program closer to its goals. As more and more staff members develop systematic mechanisms for monitoring accomplishments throughout the course of their programs, we hope that this issue of the Update will provide some useful ideas and insights.

If you have comments or desire additional information, please contact Keith Jennings (keith@ndi.org), Aaron Azelton (aaron@ndi.org) or Sylvia Panfil (sylviap@ndi.org).



How Do We Keep Programs On-Track?

Civic participation programs begin with an analysis of a country's political situation and conversations with political and civic leaders and other knowledgeable observers, in order to

clarify the type of NDI

assistance that may be needed. Once baseline information is gathered and analyzed and developmental priorities are set in consultation with indigenous groups and individuals, a proposal is developed. The proposal explains the need for the program, defines the program's goals and objectives, and describes the activities that will be completed in order to reach the stated objectives. In other words, the proposal maps out where we are going, why we are going, and how we intend to get there. Once the proposal is completed and financial resources are secured, it comes time to begin the trip. (In some cases, the trip is facilitated by staff members also developing detailed workplans.)

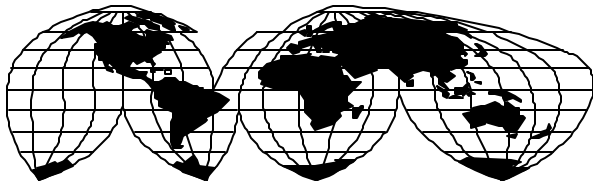
Unfortunately, the road from proposal preparation to successful program conclusion is not often well-paved or direct. It is more likely to be a winding mountain path with an occasional fork or detour that does not appear on the map. This requires program staff members to take steps periodically to assess where the program is positioned and whether it is still on the right track.

Periodic assessment prevents programs from taking a wrong turn and never stopping for directions. This is not to suggest that a turn or a change is bad or that a program cannot redefine objectives and activities mid-course, only that an unplanned and unrecognized change of direction will often lead to less than successful outcomes.

Assessment helps identify program strengths and weaknesses, and allows for continual program modification and improvement. The process also creates a body of information that can be used at the end to illustrate a program's step-by-step development. In cases where a program does not achieve its objectives, assessment information can shed light on why.

Observations and discussions with program participants and corresponding bi-weekly reports are the most elemental methods of assessing what is working and what is not working. Other regular methods may include roundtable discussions with program staff members, semi-annual focus groups with program participants, monthly interviews with participants, and survey questionnaires. Each of these methods produces information that staff members can then use to determine the effectiveness of program activities.

This Update highlights assessment activities being used by programs in Bosnia, Eastern Slavonia, Jamaica, Mozambique, and West Bank and Gaza Strip. In each case, there is an explanation of the program's purpose, the types of assessment activities, and how assessment information is used to improve the program.



Country Examples of Assessment Activities

Bosnia — Show me what you know!

After emerging from decades of communist rule and a brutal civic war, Bosnians are now attempting to build a democratic society. Bosnian citizens, however, have little experience with the principles and practices of democracy. They also lack basic knowledge of how their new government is structured and should function. To address these deficiencies, NDI began a Civic Forum program in October 1996. The program is now operating in areas around Tuzla, Banja Luka, and Mostar and involves hundreds of Bosnian citizens in monthly educational discussions and political activity.

Through the regular discussions, participants develop an understanding of democracy and their role as citizens, identify and analyze community issues, and develop the skills and values necessary to address those issues. Ultimately, discussion group participants become more willing and able to take part in political action.

Civic Forum educational discussions are based on the idea that citizens need to develop certain knowledge, skills, and values, in order to be active participants in democratic processes. Therefore, the Civic Forum team has created detailed objectives that define the particular types of knowledge, skills, and values that will be affected during each discussion. For instance, a session may seek to increase the participants' understanding of how the Bosnian government is structured and, at the same time, help the participants develop the ability to communicate and make decisions in a tolerant manner. Each discussion session in the monthly series builds purposefully on the one before it.

To assess whether session objectives are being met, the Civic Forum team incorporates activities into the program that require participants to show their understanding and know-how. In other words, the team creates opportunities for

participants to *apply* new knowledge, skills and values. By building activities into the program, the Civic Forum team is able to observe whether the participants are actually learning anything. At the same time, the activities are designed to reinforce the learning process by allowing the participants to practice new skills and values.

The discussion format itself provides a structured opportunity for citizens to practice sharing diverse opinions, collectively analyzing issues, and making inclusive decisions. The Civic Forum team, however, also creates opportunities for participants to engage in application activities outside of the discussion sessions. For example, before the September municipal elections, program participants around the Tuzla area organized and participated in candidate forums. More recently, participants around Banja Luka administered a community survey. The survey results were then circulated widely in a newsletter.

By design, the activities inside and outside the discussion groups provide an observable opportunity for participants to show what they know.

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Eastern Slavonia — Are you learning yet?

NDI initiated its Civic Forum program in Eastern Slavonia, Croatia, in July 1997. The program's inception coincided with Croatian elections, the transfer of the Eastern Slavonia region back to Croatian control, and Croatia's ongoing democratic consolidation process.

Through a series of monthly community discussions with 50 groups and the regular

distribution of printed materials, Civic Forum assists Croatian citizens in understanding democracy and their roles and responsibilities. Ultimately, the practical information and experience — gained by participating in the discussions and receiving materials — helps program participants and others exercise their rights and play an active role in political processes.

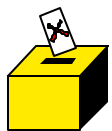
To determine whether educational objectives are being met, the Civic Forum team has undertaken a comprehensive evaluation process. The process comprises two different components. First of all, team members interview program participants every month to gather anecdotes about how the participants are using information provided during discussion sessions. The collection of anecdotes also allows team members to identify additional information needs the participants may have. The second evaluation technique applied in Eastern Slavonia is the use of survey questionnaires that measure the knowledge and attitudes of program participants. Survey questionnaires are administered at the beginning of the discussion series and again at the end. To date, NDI has administered one questionnaire and is in the process of distributing another.

NDI is comparing the results of the Civic Forum surveys to the results of a Croatia-wide baseline survey conducted by USAID in March 1997. NDI has incorporated similar questions posed by the USAID survey into the Civic Forum survey, in order to compare results accurately. More specifically, this replication of questions helps determine whether Civic Forum participants are more or less likely than the average Croatian citizen to understand democracy and be willing to participate in their community's democratic life. An initially comparison of results from the USAID and NDI surveys indicate that Civic

Forum respondents are more likely to support citizen involvement in local problem-solving. The results reveal that in a relatively short time, Civic Forum has positively affected Croatian citizens understanding of the democratic process and their attitudes toward involvement in political life. For instance, of those respondents who had already attended one or two discussions, 14 percent were more likely than the average Croatian to say they believe they can change things by participating in public affairs.

The Civic Forum team is also planning focus groups for the end of the first discussion series in March 1998. The focus groups will be run in two of the three regions where Civic Forum discussions are being held. In each of the regions, two focus groups will be conducted; one will target Civic Forum participants, the other a group of non-participants.

If you are interesting in learning more about this program, please contact Kate Allen (katea@ndi.org) or Gina Vetere (gina@ndi.org).



Jamaica — We succeeded in monitoring; now what?

Jamaica's general elections in 1993 were marred by voting irregularities and widespread violence against polling officials and voters. Committed to restoring a peaceful and credible electoral process for the December 18 general elections, a Jamaican civic group, Citizens Action for Free and Fair Elections (CAFFE), sought to organize a national network of observers to monitor the polls. With little experience in mounting such an effort, CAFFE, comprised of business, religious and civic leaders, requested NDI's assistance in developing an organizational structure and managing day-to-day training and recruitment operations. On election

day, CAFFE's 800 trained observers were present at polling sites throughout the country where they were credited with promoting voter confidence and discouraging violence.

After election day, under NDI guidance, CAFFE began the process of assessing how well the monitoring effort worked. First, CAFFE leaders interviewed volunteers throughout the country. Using information generated through the interviews, the group's leaders and NDI representatives held a review and planning meeting. After the leaders agreed that CAFFE should continue their operation and prepare for local elections scheduled for the Spring of 1998, they discussed CAFFE's strengths and weaknesses and specific goals for the future. They also discussed CAFFE's relationship with NDI and how that relationship should develop.

The review and planning discussion helped CAFFE and NDI identify successes and develop a shared vision for the future. NDI is now able to better tailor follow-on assistance.

For more information on the NDI-Jamaica program, please contact Makram Ouais (makram@ndi.org).

Mozambique — How do you really feel about Democracy?



NDI began in Mozambique with a voter education campaign leading up to the country's 1994 national elections. Since then, NDI has conducted extensive, rural-based civic education activities. In 1996 and 1997, NDI conducted activities in all 10 of Mozambique's provinces. This nation-wide program focused on democracy themes and issues identified and

tested during focus groups conducted in February 1996.

Currently, the program is centered on increasing voter registration and participation in Mozambique's first municipal elections. In preparation for this phase, NDI conducted another round of focus groups in August 1997 with eight groups in different regions. NDI organized groups comprising program participants and control groups comprising non-participants.

The focus groups helped measure the impact of previous education activities and helped to plan for activities related to the May local elections. By and large, the focus group results revealed an increased understanding of the basic democratic concepts covered in NDI's civic education program. For example, program participants displayed general knowledge of the constitution and recognized the existence elected representatives and other government officials. In addition, the research indicates a positive change in attitudes toward the multiparty democracy, as well as an increase in participants' understanding of the multiparty system. Participants voiced appreciation for the participatory methodology used in NDI's program.

The focus group study also showed, however, that while the civic education program has positively impacted Mozambicans, there still remains a need for more intensive and involved education activities, particularly in rural areas.

All focus group participants expressed a desire for information that will permit them to participate effectively in the local elections. The focus group results will play a considerable role in designing voter education materials.

Please contact Joel Mills (joelm@ndi.org) for more information on the NDI-Mozambique



program and the focus group research.

West Bank & Gaza Strip — Where do we go from here?

In anticipation of the first Palestinian elections in January 1996, NDI organized a Civic Forum program in the West Bank and Gaza. Since that time, the program has worked to strengthen the foundation for participatory democracy by increasing Palestinian understanding of democratic principles and practices. Currently, NDI is working with Civic Forum's Palestinian team members to transform the Civic Forum into an independent Palestinian NGO committed to promoting democratic development in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

In 1997, as Civic Forum closed out a two-year discussion series and began the transformation to independence, Palestinian team members held face-to-face meetings with more than 120 randomly selected program participants. This process was designed to provide direct feedback from the program participants. The interviews entailed a series of questions about the functioning and effectiveness of Civic Forum; the skill of the moderators; how the program could be improved; whether it was wise to make Civic Forum an autonomous Palestinian organization; and how the program benefited the participants.

During October 1997, NDI also organized a total of 18 focus groups with Civic Forum participants and non-participants, in order to determine 1) Palestinian attitudes about democracy; 2) the impact of Civic Forum on the knowledge of participants; and 3) the relevance of civic education in Palestine.

Both assessment activities indicated that program

participants have more knowledge about democracy and more confidence in democratic forms of organization and decisionmaking. Moreover, there was overwhelming support for the discussion-based approach to education. At the same time, the team found that the performance of some of the program moderators was inadequate, that logistical problems existed, and that program participants desire more opportunities for action.

From the information gathered, Civic Forum's Palestinian administrative team held a retreat in November and developed a detailed plan for their transformation to independence and for follow-on civic education activities.

For more information about the West Bank/Gaza civic program, please contact Margaret Zaknoen (margaret@ndi.org) or Sarah Copley (Sarahc@ndi.org).

What's Happening in Washington?

Civic Group Meetings

In early April 1997, DC-based staff members working on civic participation programs met to discuss how they could better exchange program information and learn from each other. The group decided to meet once each month to discuss civic participation themes and to practice new skills (e.g., meeting facilitation, training, and team-building).

In January 1998, Lhatoya Reed organized and facilitated the meeting which featured Ken Hashimoto, NDI representative in Republic of Srpska. Ken led an activity on how to construct an effective training session. During the February meeting, Joel Mills and Sylvia Panfil guided the group's examination of strategic planning.

The next meeting will take place March 17 and will address the topic of coalition building. Kim Pease and Katie Prud'homme will facilitate the discussion and Melissa Estok will offer the group insights from her coalition building experience in Nicaragua.

For more information on the Civic Group meetings look under:

k:users/public/teams/civpol/civicmtg

S&E TEAM BROWN BAGS

Community Organizing in Slovakia

During a brown-bag lunch on Thursday, January 15, staff members had the opportunity to query field representative David Sip and tap into his abundant knowledge of community organizing. David briefly explained the process of community organizing and then related some of the good, the bad, and the ugly of working in Presov, Slovakia for one and a half years. The Slovakia program is one of only three NDI programs where community organizing, in the sense of the Saul Alinsky model, is being used to encourage citizen participation. The other two programs are located in the Czech Republic and Bosnia.

David explained how the process of organizing should lead to three significant results: 1) tangible improvements in the lives of people; 2) empowerment of individuals and/or groups; and 3) shifts in the balance of community power. He went on to further explain the fundamental steps to effective organizing.

For more detailed information about community organizing and NDI's program in Slovakia, please refer to the organizing manual that David has also developed. The manual lays out the nuts-and-bolts of

organizing and provides a number of Slovak anecdotes. Please contact Aaron Azelton (aaron@ndi.org) if you would like a copy.

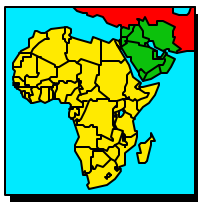
NGO Development

On Friday, January 30, 1998, at the initiative of Kate Allen, the Strategy and Evaluation team coordinated the visit of NGO consultant Michael Groh for a presentation on organizational development.

Under the heading of "What makes a good NGO," Groh outlined 12 key NGO capacity issues. These following issues were included:

- 1) Board is "Just Right"
- 2) Management structure/Coordinators
- 3) Strategic Plan
- 4) Strategic Financing
- 5) Focus and Discipline
- 6) Teamwork to the "Max"
- 7) Culture over Structure
- 8) Tight or Loose Style
- 9) Savvy about Interdependence
- 10) Know Why Funders Give and Withhold
- 11) Gets the "Big 5" Right
- 12) Regular Honest Assessments and Readjusting

If you're interested in receiving more information about the brown bag and the handouts distributed during the discussion, please contact Aaron Azelton (aaron@ndi.org) or Sylvia Panfil (sylvia@ndi.org).



LET'S WELCOME...

New Field Staff for Civic Programs

Angola

Nicola DeMarco has recently joined NDI-Angola to work on civic education activities. Before being hired by NDI, he worked as a trainer for Education Democracy International, where he trained teachers from Ethiopia, Eritrea and Kenya in civic education and democratic teaching methods. He also comes to the Institute with a noteworthy background in conducting legal education in New York city.

Ghana

Paul Nuti joined NDI's civic program in Ghana, where he will assist indigenous NGOs in playing a larger role in the public policy making process. He comes to NDI with significant experience in training, workshop design, intercultural communication, and volunteer development. In the past, he has worked as a Peace Corps volunteer in the beautiful island nation of Fiji and with other international development and human rights NGOs.

Liberia

Louis Davis Jr. is the new field coordinator for Liberia, where he will be responsible for managing NDI's Civic Forum program. Prior to joining the Institute, Louis Davis worked in Mayor's office in Chicago and on Capital Hill. Most recently, he coordinated the development of sub-grant funding programs for multi-track education programs for nine community-based organizations throughout the United States.

Michael S. Bowers has also joined the Liberia team to work on grants management. Prior to joining NDI, Michael worked for Associates in Rural Development (ARD) where he designed, implemented, and managed technical assistance and training programs for non-governmental



organizations in Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova. Michael also worked as a trainer at the Counterpart Foundation, Inc.

MORE NEWS ON ASSESSMENT...

USAID released the findings of a study of “The Impact of Civic Education Programs on Political Participation and Democratic Attitudes.” The study attempted to measure the impact of programs in the Dominican Republic and Poland. Included in the report are the following five recommendations for civic education program design:

- Build participation into the process;
- Sustain target group and follow-up;
- Use a variety of training methods;
- Draw on issues that are directly related to people’s lives;
- Include a participatory monitoring plan.

If you would like a copy of the report, please contact Aaron Azelton (aaron@ndi.org) or Sylvia Panfil (sylviap@ndi.org).



WE NEED YOUR HELP

From the Director:

The civic participation team believes that the quarterly Civic Updates are a very useful tool. In fact, we see them as one of the most important information services provided by the team to program staff members working on civic programs. I know from having lived and worked in the field, however, that they are not enough hours in the day to read every document and

respond to every request. Nonetheless, we are asking you to help us help you. In other words, for the civic team to be responsive and useful, we need your **critical** input and feedback. During 1998, we hope to document and share many of NDI’s tested approaches and lessons learned. Toward this end, we want to make sure that when we are discussing “program execution,” that everyone is on the same page and no one mistakenly believes that we mean kill the program. Seriously, your participation is important in helping us provide everyone with practical information gained through programmatic experience. We need to know that the information the we are providing is accurate, up to date, and useful. So please help us continue to provide this and other services by sharing your thoughts and experiences. Keep up the good work! For a more just and democratic world,

Keith Jennings
Director of Civic Participation Programs

Please send any comments, queries and/or suggestions you may have for future updates to Aaron Azelton (aaron@ndi.org) or Sylvia Panfil (sylviap@ndi.org). We look forward to hearing from you.

This issue of the Update was produced by Aaron Azelton and Sylvia Panfil, with contribution from the NDI staff.