

Civic Update

a newsletter of citizen participation programs worldwide

Issue IX

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Welcome to the Civic Update newsletter. This ninth edition of the update examines NDI's approach to voter education programs with specific examples of voter education techniques and of programs conducted in Guinea, Macedonia and Nepal. From information and insights provided by NDI resident representatives who worked on those programs, the country articles look at how various education methods were used, as well as draw-out some lessons learned and best practices.

What's Voting All About?

Some Important Considerations to Keep in Mind

Regular elections provide citizens with an opportunity to express their will and determine the composition of government. To make sensible choices, however, citizens must be aware of an election's purpose, their voting rights and obligations, the range of electoral options, and the voting procedures.

When citizens are not familiar with the electoral process, the results are manifested by low levels of participation, a large number of improperly cast ballots, or a shortage of confidence in the election's integrity or in the legitimacy of the results. Also, cynicism toward elections may develop when election officials do not fulfill past promises. Overcoming voter apathy has proven to be a difficult challenge in transitional societies, especially

during second elections. Therefore, programs designed to raise

the level of citizens awareness and confidence are often necessary.

Building public confidence in the electoral process requires that voters hear the voices they trust and respect.

This means having civic leaders, (e.g., community, labor, business, religious or traditional leaders) speak with forceful conviction about the importance of exercising the vote. Moreover, to encourage public confidence in the electoral process, civil society actors must be able to see all aspects of the election process and participate in the formulation of electoral policy.

It is also important to create a perception among the electorate that political parties and candidates have confidence in the integrity of the electoral process. Political competitors should be encouraged to speak to this issue or be part of an effort to inform various sectors of the electorate about the overall electoral process. In short, the signals sent by leaders, whether civic or political, affect social trust regarding the integrity and importance of their vote, and, furthermore, the integrity of the electoral process.

What's NDI's Approach?

NDI conducts impartial voter education programs that provide citizens with the information and know-how required to participate in election processes. Additionally, NDI

programs help citizens understand that they are the ultimate authority in a democracy and,

as such, they have a responsibility to participate. At the same time, however, NDI programs help citizens understand that an election by itself does not guarantee the conditions for democracy.

Depending on the political situation, social and cultural traditions, and the particular educational needs of citizens, NDI draws on a range of voter education techniques. These include facilitated discussions, nonpartisan posters, pamphlets and buttons, voter awareness kits, radio and television announcements and dramatizations, theatrical presentations, voting simulations and candidate forums.

Often, NDI provides training, technical assistance and materials support to nonpartisan civil society organizations conducting countrywide voter education campaigns. By working with existing organizations, NDI helps build a local voter education capacity. NDI has also worked with national election commissions to design and implement impartial voter education activities and to encourage the systematic review of registration rolls.

While accurately measuring the results of voter education programs can sometimes prove difficult, public opinion surveys, interviews and focus groups are methods frequently used to measure the impact of NDI voter education program activities.

Macedonian NGO Coalition Rocks Voter Turnout

Macedonians 'rocked the vote' in advance of the October 18, 1998 parliamentary elections by using an innovative and imaginative multimedia voter education and get-out-the-vote (GOTV) program organized in partnership with NDI. The Institute brought together four Macedonian NGOs to form the Practice Democracy coalition to increase awareness of, confidence in and turnout for the parliamentary polls. With NDI's assistance, the coalition designed and distributed educational materials for voters, organized the "Democracy Bus" country tour, and obtained media coverage.

Developed in July 1998, the NDI voter education program was designed in response to confusion surrounding Macedonia's new election system, which changed from majoritarian to mixed, and concerns over low voter turnout, especially among youth. Also, voter ID cards were introduced for the first time and electoral districts had been redrawn.

Heather Mayes, former resident representative for the NDI-Macedonia voter education project, discusses how the program was designed and implemented, and shares her thoughts on some of the principal lessons learned and best practices.

How did NDI determine the best mechanisms to educate Macedonian voters (e.g., media campaign, democracy bus, poster/flyer distribution)? What main factors were taken into account?

"I had the benefit of spending time in the country during several other trips over the course of two years, and was aware of other projects taking place there. Everyone — citizens, NGOs, the election commission, etc. — had stressed that any voter education campaign would have to *What specific groups did you target as*

'grab voters' attention,' and be exciting, new and different. In short, it had to get people motivated because many people had begun to feel like 'what's democracy done for me lately?'

Poster and flyer distribution and media outreach were thought to be, for the most part, the essentials of any campaign like this. I don't think that we ever thought about NOT doing this. Eventually, the media turned out to be one of our biggest assets. We played up the voter education campaign, they [the media] became hooked, and really spread the word. People began hearing about us on TV, so when they later saw the posters and bus, they already had an idea about who we were and what we were about (most importantly, nonpartisanship). Sometimes the posters reinforced TV coverage; it was a very complementary relationship."

What were the challenges and advantages to working with an NGO coalition on a voter education campaign? Any recommendations for those considering working with an NGO coalition in this respect?

"Dealing with the coalition was very touchy at times and wonderful on other occasions. In general, this type of partnership required a lot of understanding and support.

The biggest challenge for me was the [multi] ethnic question. There was really only one [ethnically-based] NGO that I initially felt it was critical to work with given the context of a very ethnically charged environment. Soon, however, I realized that continuing to work with them would compromise the integrity of the project. I was scared to work without them, but I decided to let them go and move ahead for the good of the project.

I was careful to always have ethnic representation, not only that of Albanians and Macedonians, but also including Turkish, Romanian, etc. — this approach worked quite well. The group worked very hard and very well together, but as in any group situation, there are workers, leaders and others who don't positively contribute. But that's to be expected.

I think one good thing we did was to make it very clear from the start that NDI funding would dry up after the election. So the coalition decided on its own to try and keep the group going, and did not rely on or expect NDI funding. This was a very good decision because NDI could have easily decided to continue funding them more if it wanted -- [but] it would have been much more difficult to take funding away once it was promised."

Glossary of Terms A Basic Overview of Electoral Systems

Majority systems are based on the principle that the candidate who receives the majority of votes cast wins.

Proportional representation (PR) systems are based on the principle that political parties win legislative seats in proportion to their share of votes cast.

Mixed systems are based on the principle that votes cast translate into seats won through a process falling somewhere between the majoritarianism of majority systems and the proportionality of PR systems.

For more information on electoral systems, please contact NDI's Election Processes Team.

partners and why?

“We targeted civic-minded individuals, national projects, youth running those projects and youth-centered projects. Sometimes you simply need to make the best of some of the groups and not allow first impressions to be lasting. The groups that we thought would be the best left the project, and some of the seemingly disorganized groups ended up rising to the occasion and became effective. In retrospect, it was smart to pick some groups that, at the time, did not have any other big projects and funding, and were just excited to work with an international organization [NDI] on a project that would give them exposure and credentials, helping them perhaps with the next big grant. It takes a lot of work initially to find groups/people/leaders who are outside of the established ‘network,’ but it’s worth it!! I feel that, in the end, we developed some new leaders in this project — they had a positive experience and are now more likely [I believe] to do other similar projects.”

The Practice Democracy program used surveys to assess its impact on Macedonian voters. Would you recommend this method for assessing the impact of other voter education programs?

“Yes and no. Yes, because it is important to get some numbers for evaluation purposes, and I don’t think there is a more appropriate method. No, because I think the anecdotal information is more telling of the success of a project, but not as an objective. It was helpful for me to ask random people on election day if they had heard of the project. I think if voter education projects have a domestic monitoring component, perhaps they could do their own spot checking interviews during election day.”

Practice Democracy poster hanging in my room, which the coalition members all signed at the end of the bus tour. It reads, ‘Thanks for the unforgettable eight day tour of Macedonia,’ ‘Thanks for greatest laughs, fun and hard work’ and ‘Practice

What, would you say, were some of the best practices and lessons learned from this voter education program?

“I learned to go with my heart and stick to what I knew was right, figuring that if I did that the rest would fall into place. But, I guess that’s life and not just voter education. The relationship with the Elections Commissioner was very ‘hot and cold,’ and we had worked hard to make that work from the beginning. It’s important to get the ‘officials’ to appreciate your point-of-view, despite how difficult it may seem — it will only help the program.

For instance, obtaining a permit to drive a decorated bus throughout the country may have been very difficult had we received any more resistance.

Give the citizens ownership of the project. Because things were not written in stone, local participants were able to help design the project at times, and the program resulted in a true team effort. The bus tour design and materials production, for example, were all a group effort.

Have fun!! Create an atmosphere in which the local participants will enjoy themselves.

With respect to the media, write professional press releases, make friends with reporters (e.g., attend coffees and other social events from the start). Invite the media into the day-to-day operations. In our case, we had reporters riding on the bus.

I wish the group had continued and tried to get funding for the presidential election, but I don’t think the group could hold together, because they hadn’t identified a coalition leader other than the NDI resident representative. It’s a shame, but now a lot of the talent of the group has moved on to bigger (paid) positions, such as with the Embassy, the Italian PHARE project, and as a new NDI local staff member. These are indeed impressive placement statistics, but, unfortunately, that means that they are no longer available for the Practice Democracy coalition.

I don’t have any huge things that I would have changed. It was truly a voter education project that was right on target in terms of design, implementation and time line. I also had the good fortune to work with good people, and tap into a lot of positive energy. No one involved will soon forget the experience. I still have a

MEDIA OUTREACH	
<p>In many cases, media education campaigns have proven to be effective methods for reaching the most isolated voters. In countries where there is access to media resources, a media education campaign can offer the advantage of simultaneously reaching millions in an engaging, educational and entertaining fashion.</p> <p>NDI’s experience in conducting programs that involve media outreach have allowed it to glean the following best practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RESEARCH THE MESSAGE, e.g., using focus groups or public opinion surveys. The investment ensures that your media dollars are spent in a manner likely to have the most impact. • KEEP IT SIMPLE. Texts should be short and clear to read, and complemented with photos or drawings to illustrate key voting concepts. • MAKE IT ENTERTAINING. An educational message is much more likely to be embraced when it is wrapped in an attractive and entertaining package. • MAKE IT INTERACTIVE. Engage the audience in the message, e.g. game or talk show series. 	

everything!"

While it is often difficult to determine the direct impact of voter education and GOTV programs, a majority of respondents from surveys conducted in two target cities indicated that Practice Democracy activities increased their enthusiasm for the 1998 parliamentary elections.

“Radio Spots” Help Educate Guinean Voters

With a history of dominant one-party rule, and elections marred with irregularities, political violence and low voter turnout, Guinea's 1998 December presidential elections were a critical benchmark to the country's democratization efforts. Based on the results of a pre-election assessment of Guinea's political climate, NDI determined that it would conduct a program to help ensure the integrity and participatory nature of the electoral process. In preparation for the 1998 presidential elections, the Institute conducted a program that: provided training for political party poll watchers; gave international support to poll watchers on election day; and, assisted in the development of voter education messages.

Although the Guinean government had already taken many steps to help secure a more transparent and credible election process, NDI initiated this program with significant challenges still facing voter's participation in the 1998 presidential elections. For instance, relevant policy changes, as requested by the opposing political parties, had yet to be met. These included: a full and accurate distribution of voters' cards; the provision of identity cards to the population free of charge; and, the liberalization of the broadcast media.

Could you briefly describe the GOTV messages? And, what factors were

In light of the existing challenges and other factors — such as time — NDI helped design and implement a voter education campaign that utilized radio to enhance voter awareness and participation in Guinea's December 1998 elections.

NDI's former resident representative in Guinea Kim Pease elaborates on how the program's voter education component was designed and implemented, and reflects on lessons learned.

How did NDI determine that radio diffusion was the best and only mechanism to educate Guinean voters? What main factors were taken into account?

“We wanted to reach the widest audience possible. Although I don't have the statistics on hand, we determined that radio was the best way to diffuse our message because of its prevalence throughout the country — in urban as well as rural environments — and its prominence in the country as the news source for both men and women, young and old.

Although the only countrywide radio in Guinea is state-owned, we found it to be our best option. Televisions are basically owned by the upper echelons of Guinean society, and its viewers are concentrated mostly in the larger cities. There is only one TV Guinean station, and like the radio, it's state-owned. Newspapers are really only available in the capital and have strong political parties.”

What were some of the challenges of drafting and overseeing the translation of a series of get-out-the vote (GOTV) messages into seven local languages? What, from your experience, is the most effective way to go about this?

“Drafting and translating the text was a large challenge. The way we set about it was to ask political party coalitions, both ruling and opposition, to each nominate considered when designing their content and language?”

(two or three) people. We also asked the Ministry of Communication and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (which had experience in this domain during the previous legislative election) to each nominate one person.

We then invited all of these nominees to a three-day weekend at a resort (not as glamorous as you'd think) outside of the capital. There, we spent three entire days drafting text, word by word, into French and three different French dialogues. As for the translating, we used a similar approach: we asked both coalitions to nominate representatives capable of translation into one of seven national languages. We also asked for some representatives from the Ministry of Communication. We chose not to use professional translators for several reasons, mainly to: gain party buy-in into the program; and avoid any political innuendoes in the translation, since most of the national languages are translated by concepts and not words. For the translation session, we invited all the coalition members together in one room, divided them into language teams, and set them to work for an entire day. By the end of the day, the members of each team (which comprised both opposition and ruling coalitions representatives) had to agree on the translated text, and sign off on the final version. This process was extremely effective, and I would recommend others use this method [when feasible].

In this case, we opted not to use nongovernmental organizations in the GOTV portion of the program because they were not perceived as nonpartisan actors. By working directly with political parties, we were more able to decipher political leanings and objectives. Also, we had little time to develop, translate, record and broadcast the messages, and had to begin implementing the program's GOTV portion very shortly after our arrival in-country. We didn't have time, therefore, to do an in-depth assessment of civil society, and ended up choosing a more direct approach.”

"The text was simple: how and why to vote, and citizen responsibility and attitude ('comportment') in the voting station. Many considerations went into drafting the GOTV messages, from developing the themes, to producing the text, word by word. By working in multipartisan teams (including the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and Ministry of Communication) and working collectively throughout the long, three-day session, the entire group was able to agree on the texts.

The major factor considered was the education level of the listening audience. Guinea has a very high illiteracy rate and very few people, especially in the rural areas, have received much formal education. So we had to keep the messages simple. On a side note, one cultural aspect of the texts that you will probably notice (which is not the greatest from a feminine perspective) is that the dialogues are between one man and one woman — and in most instances the man is portrayed as the knowledgeable one, instructing the woman on how things should be done."

What were some of the challenges and advantages of working with radio stations across the country to broadcast a series of GOTV messages? Do you have any recommendations for those considering working with radio stations on similar projects?

"Although there were a few private radio stations scattered throughout Guinea, the only countrywide radio was government-owned and it broadcasted from numerous stations around the country in the languages of respective regions. Because of the Ministry of Communication's active involvement in text development and other aspects during the program's initiation, NDI was able to gain its buy-in into the program. This was something that wasn't easily obtained by other international development-oriented NGOs. The Ministry agreed to broadcast the GOTV messages, however the caveat was that NDI had to record the scripts using government radio animators. Although we speculated that our messages could be distorted in the recording phase, or associated with the government due to the voices used, we made sure that the translation teams had the chance to listen to the recorded messages and give their approval before we broadcasted. We found that the texts were appropriately recorded, without distortion."

Overall, what, would you say, were some of the best practices and lessons learned from the voter education portion of the Guinea program?

"In my opinion, the Guinea voter education program went extremely well, largely due

to the vision and expertise of the NDI resident program director Ali-Diabacte. By using a multipartisan approach in the development of the program, and by keeping the message simple, but direct, we surmounted numerous potential obstacles."

Promoting "Clean and Conscious" Voting in Nepal

Since 1990, when a people's movement helped restore democracy to Nepal, the country's elections have taken place on a regular basis. But while polls have generally been characterized as free and fair, in many instances, politicians have practiced and succeeded in vote-buying — promising Nepalis gifts in exchange for votes. And, as in other countries, citizens have often neglected to critically review the backgrounds and goals of candidates before casting their ballots. In preparation for parliamentary elections on May 3 and 17, 1999, NDI principally worked with the Nepali Election Commission to combat these problems and to encourage peaceful participation in the country's polls.

Riding the Democracy Bus...

Modeled after MTV's "Rock the Vote" campaign, NDI's Democracy Bus traveled around the country blaring the message, "If you want to be heard, Practice Democracy!" The bus, shrink-wrapped with the practice democracy logo, was equipped with a sound system that played a mix of popular music and the coalition's public service announcements in four languages.

At each stop, twenty Practice Democracy volunteers, decked with orange megaphones, converged on the town to distribute voter education brochures and hang GOTV posters. In Skopje, after volunteers approached shops and cafes, the largest chain of pizza places offered to distribute voter guides and flyers. Altogether, volunteers traveled to more than 20 cities and towns, and reached thousands of Macedonian citizens.

The Democracy Bus was one part of a comprehensive voter education effort that included brochures, posters, billboards, radio public service announcements, free media and candidate forums.

Former NDI resident representative for Nepal Maryam Montague describes how

various components of the voter education campaign were designed and the best practices and lessons learned from the program.

How did NDI determine the best mechanisms to educate voters (e.g., radio campaign, street drama, poster distribution)? What main factors were considered?

“The different voter education mechanisms were designed to collectively form a comprehensive voter education strategy. In other words, they were different pieces that purposefully formed a whole. The selected mechanisms also fit two criteria: 1) ability to reach target audiences within set period of time; and 2) cost effectiveness. So, for instance, while I would have been interested in using a civic forum-like methodology, it didn't meet these two criteria. We also ruled out the use of TV for this reason.

Here's more detail on the rationale behind the different components:

Posters

The posters were designed to give a visual punch and serve as a reminder to voters in the days leading up to the election. In designing the posters, care was also taken to make poster images inclusive of the many different ethnic groupings, religions and customs of the people in Nepal, so no one would feel 'left out.'

As for poster messages, they were kept short and simple so semi-literate voters could understand them. However, to ensure that non-literate voters did not misinterpret the messages, we conducted focus groups with them to pre-test the posters. It turned out that many non-literate voters were able to understand the messages of the different posters purely through the visual imagery.

In addition to very good pre-testing of posters, the most important factor

considered was the availability of a reliable poster distribution system. In the case of Nepal, twenty of the country's seventy-five districts are inaccessible by road. Fortunately, we had an excellent relationship and partnership with the Election Commission, which agreed to have posters delivered via helicopter to all twenty of the remote districts. The Election Commission also covered all of the costs of this undertaking, which would have been prohibitively expensive for NDI. Posters are very expensive in general and were, by far, the most expensive of the three voter education mechanisms that we used. It was essential to spend a lot of time thinking about distribution strategies beforehand to make posters more cost effective.

Radio

I think radio, on the other hand, is the single most cost effective means of voter education, particularly in countries with logistical problems and high rates of illiteracy, such as Nepal. We used a combination of different radio stations for maximum effect. Our biggest investment was in public radio, which had both central and regional broadcasting stations.

As a result of the cost effectiveness of regional broadcasting, we were able to tailor it to twelve different languages in Nepal.

We also used FM radio to capture the youth vote in districts surrounding Kathmandu. There was a lot of voter apathy among Nepal's younger voters (something we discovered through focus groups), and we wanted to find a way to reach them. Trendy and wildly popular FM radio was the way to go.

Our radio programming was very popular, in part because we worked hard to include entertainment for everyone.

Based on focus groups results, we included songs that ranged from different kinds of artists, from very traditional to hip new bands, according to what was popular. There were also public service announcements (PSAs), talk shows with

popular DJs and a radio drama. The different kinds of radio programming helped ensure that we were reaching voters, one way or another. Overall, radio programming was designed to be fun and entertaining, as well as informative. I highly recommend this kind of 'info-tainment.'

In summary, radio proved to be a wonderful means of communication, mainly because of:

1) its accessibility to non-literate voters; 2) its potential to reach a maximum number of voters since most people have access to radio (even if they don't directly own one); and, 3) its ability to leverage Nepal's most popular form of entertainment: radio.

Street Dramas

Because there are very few forms of entertainment in Nepal, particularly in rural areas, a street drama voter education component really provided fun and learning for the whole family. If money is no object, then I think that this kind of civic education technique is terrific — it not only sensitizes eligible voters, but also provides important 'food for thought' for children and teenagers, who will one day be able to vote. Street dramas are also accessible to both the non-literate and literate.

We organized a total of 43 street drama performances.”

What are your recommendations for working with a creative arts group, such as the Nepal Film Artist Association, to conduct a voter education program? How did you persuade artists to lend their time and talents to the project?

“Our partnership with the Nepal Film Artist Association was absolutely essential for the radio component of our voter education campaign. Because of its well established network of entertainers, we were able to access a diverse and talented group of artists in a short period of time. The Association was also able to offer us valuable advice about the popularity of stars, and suggest good substitutions when actors were not available.

We really didn't have to convince artists to join 'Project Clean and Conscious Voter' because this was already done by the Association. The only lobbying I had to do was to get the Association to work with us in the first place."

What, in your opinion, were some of the best practices and lessons learned from this voter education program?

"In terms of best practices, there were several:

1) **Draw as diverse a pool of creative talent into your effort, as soon as possible.** Get to know all the artistic people in town. Their advice and references will really save you lots of time and money.

2) **Organize creative brainstorming sessions with groups of artists/technicians.** Early in our programming, I organized a creative workshop that brought together poster designers, and song and jingle writers. In our case, we ended up producing some fantastic material in one afternoon. These people feed off each other, i.e., one person will start a sentence and another will finish it.

3) **Pre-test everything!!** Make sure that you spend money where it counts — ensuring message clarity. We pre-tested four different groups for our program: mixed literate, non-literate, women and political party workers. This process helped us ensure that we were getting the different perspectives. We also pre-tested in different regions, to make sure that different regions viewed the messages the same way.

4) **Build a strong relationship with the Election Commission and work to transfer lessons learned to them.** We created a program steering committee that included the chief election commissioner or one of the other election commissioners (when the chief wasn't available). The committee met on a regular basis and

the Commission was kept fully apprised of what was happening. This helped ensure program **buy-in** and **ownership**. The Commission later really helped with problem solving when we ran into glitches.

5) **Develop a program timeline and stick to it.** We developed a day-by-day, election count down timeline that outlined our projections for task completion, and updated it weekly. The timeline helped us ensure that all critical deadlines were met. We also gave all of our relevant partners a copy so that expectations would be very clear from the outset

6) **Keep the funder apprised of what you are doing.** In our case, we included our funder, the British Department for International Development in the program's steering committee, and briefed them on a weekly basis. The result: the funder really appreciated our efforts in this regard, and even offered us an additional sum of money to do an add-on program.

7) **Develop several methods for materials distribution.** Our distribution mechanisms, included the local government federation, the Election Commission and local NGOs. It was this combination that helped us make sure that our posters got everywhere we wanted them to go.

8) **Never assume that you know the voters.** The only way to know their opinions is to ask them. We conducted focus groups to ask voters about information important to our program. We were often surprised by their answers!!

As for lessons learned from the program, here are a few:

1) We had assumed that all the artists would donate their time for free, but were wrong. However, because it was for a good cause, many artists reduced their fees fairly dramatically. I recommend developing enough **flexibility in your budget** to allow for

Train-the-Trainers Network

In many African countries, voter education programs have met similar challenges: contacting large amounts of citizens who are spread unevenly over vast areas, often connected by inadequate roads, with little if any formal communications systems, and frequently without the resources to travel or own telephones, radios or televisions.

Although NDI did not invent the train-the-trainers methodology, its track record in implementing voter education programs with this strategy reinforces its multiple payoffs.

The train-the-trainers methodology is founded upon the advantages of the multiplier effect. For instance, train one person who can train three; each of the three can then train three, reaching nine; each of the nine could then train three, reaching twenty-seven. As a result, forty people will have been trained more efficiently and effectively than if the original trainer had to move from individual to individual. This strategy has allowed one central organization or individual to motivate a network that can easily reach further and wider than its originator. In most NDI train-the-trainers networks, a core group of under twenty people are routinely able to reach tens of thousands, and often hundreds of thousands of citizens.

Some of the most important practices that have made this methodology successful include:

*Identifying key members of the community for training, i.e., those who enjoy a good reputation and have an existing network of contacts.

*Strategically identifying communities for training in relation to their geographic location to ensure that they are in a position to reach others.

*Designing training programs that require active participation by the trainers to make sure that they leave the program prepared to train others.

*Providing materials that are easily transportable and can easily be reproduced or that are available in large quantities.

Another advantage of this methodology is that the network can be reused to train election monitors or provide post-election civic education.

these kinds of changes.

2) Have *back-up plans* for materials distribution. Increasing Maoist unrest in certain parts of the country meant that we had to think very carefully about our distribution plans and alter them to avoid hard hit areas."

NDI Voter Education Resources

◆ "The role of Electoral Management Bodies in Supporting Voter Education: Lessons Learned and Challenges, Education for Participation?" written by NDI Director of Citizen Participation Programs Keith Jennings in preparation for a workshop sponsored by the UNDP (Mexico City, May 1999)

◆ A chronology of past and present NDI voter education programs is currently being produced.

Citizen Participation Team Activities

NGO Leadership Series

The series was designed by NDI's Citizen Participation Team to allow NDI staff members to learn more about the work of NGO's located in the DC metropolitan area, and to strengthen the Institutes relationship with such organizations.

* During the month of June, the Executive Director of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights Wade Henderson joined NDI staff members to discuss the role of advocacy and coalition building.

* Following in September, Kumi Naidoo, CEO and Secretary General of CIVICUS, spoke about civil society development worldwide, and his experience in South Africa's anti-apartheid movement.

* October's NGO Leadership Lecture speaker, Executive Director of the

Considerations for Increasing Turnout of Women Voters

Women often represent half or more than half of voting populations. In response to significant challenges facing women's participation in the voting process, NDI has on occasion tailored voter education programs exclusively geared toward women. As a result, the Institute has learned some valuable lessons for reaching women and empowering them to vote.

In Egypt, for instance, part of NDI's work with its local partner the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights (ECWR) in 1996 proved that educating and encouraging women to register on the electoral roll is an important step in increasing their turnout as voters. In this case, as in many, women were more likely than men to not know that voting requires prior registration on the electoral roll, and lacked the information, confidence and support to take this step. NDI addressed this by supporting ECWR's effort to: educate women about the relevance and process of voter registration; and accompany women to voter registration sites and walk them through the process.

With NDI's 1994 voter education program in Nepal, the main challenges facing women's participation in the voting process were linked to: low levels of awareness; high voter apathy; and the influence of male family members over access to and participation in the vote. In an effort to increase the number and integrity of women's vote, NDI designed a program that combined education on women's rights with information on techniques for women to get out the women's vote. Some of the important program approaches used included: conducting the program at the local level to increase women's (particularly housewives) accessibility to program activities and information; using women facilitators for training workshops; and, using male leaders as resource persons for training sessions to obtain greater male buy-in into the program. These approaches helped facilitate women's access to program activities, and assisted in changing attitudes towards women's participation in political processes.

(For more information on past NDI programming to promote women's participation in political processes and politics, see Civic Update, Issue VI and Political Party Update, Issue V at: www.ndi.org/wom_up.htm.)

Solidarity Center Harry Kamberis, discussed the work of the Solidarity Center and potential ways to foster the Center's relationship with NDI.

Workshop on Designing a Strategic Plan for an Advocacy Campaign

In October, the Citizen Participation Team organized a workshop featuring renowned U.S. civic trainer and former DNC official Heather Booth. Booth is also a founder of Chicago's MidWest Academy and has participated as a trainer in NDI's Civic Forum program in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The workshop was a result of NDI's Volunteer Roundtable Discussion, an event held in July 1999 in conjunction with the Volunteer Reception.

For a copy of NDI's voter education documents, or more information on these events, please contact the Citizen Participation Team .

CIVIC UPDATE

The Civic Update is a regular production of NDI's Citizen Participation Team. We ask that you please send any comments or suggestions you may have to Citizen Participation Team Members: Sylvia Panfil (sylviap@ndi.org), Aaron Azelton (aaron@ndi.org), or Keith Jennings (keith@ndi.org).

Also, we are always looking for insightful articles to include in the newsletter, so please do not hesitate send us any submissions for future issues. The next edition of the Update will focus on working with civic groups on domestic election monitoring projects.

Thanks and we sincerely hope you found this newsletter of interest.

For back issues of the Civic Update refer to <http://www.ndi.org/civup.htm>

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Country Articles

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Montague, with contributions from NDI staff

A special thanks to the Election Processes Team for their comments and suggestions

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