



# Best Practices of Effective Parties

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## Building Party-Civil Society Solutions to Citizen Concerns

A participatory workbook for political party activists

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## Overview: Why consider *party-civil society* solutions to citizen concerns?

*In 20 years of work with political parties in more than 50 countries, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) has seen that successful parties are those that are committed to best practices in outreach to new sectors, transparency, and internal democracy. Effective party engagement with civil society can strengthen all three of these areas as explored in this workbook for party activists and trainers.*

Ask a party member what he thinks of civic organizations and you may feel the tension rise. Ask a member of a civic organization what he thinks of political parties and similar tension may be apparent. In many parts of the world, political parties and civil society organizations (CSOs) work together to build effective solutions to citizen concerns. This is not the case in many Latin American countries however, where the roles of parties and the rest of civil society are increasingly blurred and growing competition and antagonism have the potential to threaten democratic progress.

The ideal—balanced roles

The right of citizens to participate in public affairs as individuals or through organizations such as political parties and civic groups is a fundamental principle of democracy. Participation in political parties helps to aggregate diverse interests, develop compromise and consensus on national policies and legislation, and form governments and legislatures. Citizens participating in CSOs promote community involvement, government responsiveness and accountability, give a voice to underrepresented sectors, and help to focus society’s attention on scores of important issues, among other things.

This CSO activity is often described as contributing to the “demand side” in politics by serving as a constructive means for citizens to make their needs known.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, political parties provide the “supply side” by helping to turn citizen interests and demands into proposals, policies and laws. Together, parties and civil society organizations can build effective solutions to citizen concerns.

For example, poor citizens may have difficulty getting adequate health care. A CSO that works to improve public health might publicize the dire situation and offer ideas about how health services could be improved. (i.e. the civic group publicizes the “demand” for improved health care.) A political party, in turn, could then incorporate some of the CSO’s ideas into a health platform and

**Our new political reality**  
Political parties must recognize that they are now competing for political “space” with NGOs, single-issue lobby groups, ecology and environmental organizations, human rights groups, women’s groups, regional development organizations, ethnically-based support groups....

Because of the more singular focus of these groups and organizations, they can acquire and retain public credibility and develop clear public messages more successfully than most political parties.

It is important therefore that parties adapt to this new reality and in particular that they engage with and learn from such groups and organizations.

—Michael O’Reilly, *Fine Gael Party, Ireland*

<sup>1</sup> There are exceptions to this—some civic groups provide services (e.g., low-cost health care), in essence, providing part of the supply side that might normally be provided by the government or the private sector. But in general, civic groups active in public affairs provide the demand side of the equation.

channel the information to its representatives in government to develop legislation, policies and programs for a workable solution to the problem. (i.e. the party is responding to the demand with a “supply” of concrete proposals, laws and programs to improve health care.)<sup>2</sup> In this manner, parties and CSOs have a functional and mutually beneficial relationship that benefits society.

Case of Latin America—blurred roles, competition and antagonism

In theory, parties and CSOs each have clearly delineated complementary roles. But in today’s modern world, roles overlap more and some parties can feel their political space threatened. In Latin America, in particular, this has led often to increased antagonism and competition, rather than cooperation.

Michael O’Reilly of Ireland’s Fine Gael party highlighted this dynamic in his address to a group of Latin American parties in 2004, when he observed that all over the world, “political parties are... competing for political ‘space’ with NGOs, single-issue lobby groups, ecology and environmental organizations, human rights groups, women’s groups, regional development organizations, ethnically-based support groups, [etc]...” In today’s increasingly complex world in which parties are expected to have expertise in a diverse array of concerns, party think-tanks are less frequent than in the past, and often parties are contesting elections without regard to their ideology and without well-developed platforms on the most important issues.

O’Reilly noted that “[b]ecause of the more singular focus of ... [civic] groups..., they can acquire and retain public credibility and develop clear public messages more successfully than most political parties.”<sup>3</sup> When the CSO is a public watchdog group observing and commenting on the political process, this clarity of message can be directly damaging to political parties by putting them in a bad light. It is no surprise therefore, that tensions may exist between the groups.

An important difference between the two is that while both may develop policy options, parties can implement those options through elected representatives in the government while CSOs are usually limited to advocating from the outside.<sup>4</sup> In addition, parties have the difficult task of being accountable to both their members and the entire electorate while CSOs often serve specific, supportive, segments of society.

Further complications arise due to the fact that parties are no longer the only ones providing a structure for political participation or training of new leaders. In some cases, CSOs are asked by parties or the national legislature to train their new leaders. CSOs provide venues for citizens to participate politically in a myriad of ways. In fact, many political leaders emerge from active participation in CSOs.

The latter is a natural outcome of citizen participation in the public affairs arena however, some Latin American parties worry that some CSOs want to eventually become a political party. While many CSOs purposely choose to design their organization and activities to be non-partisan, others play more active political roles. One place where the expanded role of CSOs has caused tension is Bolivia, where recent changes in the electoral laws allow candidates to be nominated not just by

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<sup>2</sup> For additional discussion on this topic see Ivan Doherty’s complete article

<sup>3</sup> Michael O’Reilly

<sup>4</sup> Some exceptions include Bolivia, Thailand and the Philippines (Gwendolyn Bevis).



political parties but also by community associations.<sup>5</sup> This practice provided alternate ways for citizens to win political power and upended one of the traditionally understood roles of parties. Not all parties see it that way, however. In some countries internal party apprehension regarding CSOs is so strong that party leaders end up avoiding any effort to find common ground, generate synergy and forge mutually beneficial agreements between the groups—a loss to both. In Mexico, the *Partido de la Revolución Democrática* (PRD) viewed civil society activism in politics as an opportunity and invited civil society to run as PRD candidates to improve the party’s credibility.

Newspapers and television can contribute to the distrust between the parties and civil society: while CSOs are painted as virtuous, often political parties and politicians are vilified and party progress and success stories are not reported.

While these external factors may contribute, why did the space historically occupied by parties open up to CSOs?

In Latin America today, parties often neglect their role as organizations that aggregate citizen interests. Closed political parties that fail to seek citizen or CSO input or are indifferent to their concerns open political space for other organizations and receive low public approval ratings. Few parties rigorously research and respond to citizen needs and translate them into clear platforms. Few parties have adequately encouraged and nurtured new leadership or delivered on campaign promises when in government. Meanwhile, many Latin American countries are currently challenged by governance problems, instability and conflict and citizens and CSOs begin to question the abilities or motives of those they perceive as responsible for finding solutions to these problems: political parties.

It doesn’t have to be like this. While parties and CSOs may disagree on the most important issues facing society or how to address them, expressing conflicting viewpoints can actually be healthy for the political system and help to create a better understanding of the issues and potential solutions. When a political system is functioning well, these exchanges lead to new insights and workable compromises essential for a vibrant democracy. Michael O’Reilly counsels “it is important therefore that parties adapt to this new reality and in particular that they engage with and learn from such groups and organizations.”

Who is this workbook for?

Creating and maintaining a political party that is vibrant, dynamic, connected and competitive is a process that requires constant work and focus on growth and development. This workbook, *Building Party-Civil Society Solutions to Citizen Concerns*, is designed to assist those objectives. It is intended for political parties and party activists interested in helping to strengthen parties by engaging CSO’s.

Political party activists and trainers should use this workbook as a tool for exploring issues that may arise when joining forces with other civil society actors. Even in the best of cases, when the benefits of working together are clear to both, disincentives and resistance to change can impede progress. The purpose of establishing constructive dialogue is to help political parties and CSOs get beyond negative perceptions, identify similar interests, understand the benefits of working together, and construct working relationships to build effective solutions to citizen participation.

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<sup>5</sup> This is also the case in Thailand and the Philippines.



Party activists can identify approaches to interacting with CSOs by completing the exercises individually while the party's trainers can adapt the exercises for participatory trainings based on party needs.

Party activists will use interactive exercises to analyze and define their party's ideal approach to CSOs. Activists will then apply the concepts they have learned about CSOs to a fictitious case. At the end of the workbook, party activists should have increased knowledge about their party's approach to interacting with CSOs and be able to make recommendations to strengthen their party's ability to investigate, communicate or collaborate with CSOs.

Examples of successful interactions between CSOs and political parties can be found in textboxes throughout the workbook.

NDI works to inform parties about the importance of strong democratically organized civil society, and likewise works to inform citizens and civil society about the complementary roles of political parties. We invite you to write NDI about your experiences so that we can share with others and improve this resource over time. For more information about party/civil society relations as well as other topics of interest to political party activists and trainers, we invite you to join in the discussion with other party practitioners at [www.politicalpartynetwork.org](http://www.politicalpartynetwork.org).





## **Building party-civil society solutions: goals and objectives**

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At the end of this workbook, you will be able to:

1. Describe the benefits of engaging with civil society
2. Identify techniques for connecting to CSOs
3. Develop a strategy for collaboration with civil society partners



## Getting Past Perceptions

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***Objective: To define civil society and the benefits of working together***

Historically, CSOs have been an essential component of a healthy democracy as they serve as a crucial conduit between the state and its citizens. Yet only recently have so many CSOs become active in the political arena with comments, criticisms, proposals, demonstrations and services that intersect with the work of political parties. While this can be a tremendous opportunity for political parties to build stronger organizations, achieve electoral success and represent their constituents more effectively and for civil society organizations to achieve their missions, often there is great distance between the two.

Why? Let's start with looking at your perception of civil society.

### Activity 1: What do we think of them?

***Objective: To describe party perspectives of civil society***

What do political parties think of civil society organizations? In the space below, name three or four things that come to mind when you think of civil society organizations.

1.

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2.

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3.

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4.

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#### Questions to consider

What personal experiences have you had that contribute to your perceptions of civil society organizations? Who do you know who is active in a civil society organization? Does knowing someone in a particular organization influence what you think of the organization or their intent? What would your party members think if the party collaborated with CSOs? How do the media cover CSOs? How does that contribute to these perceptions?



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Often, political parties have negative perceptions of CSOs – some complain “they are constantly criticizing parties” or “they are secretly trying to replace political parties.” Such perceptions can make it hard to build a constructive relationship, even if the party could benefit from the additional expertise or ideas from CSOs. Even when some party members are interested in exploring the possible benefits to working in partnership with CSOs they often encounter resistance from their party leaders and members.

This can be true in civil society organizations as well.

## Activity 2: What do they think of us?

***Objective: To describe civil society perspectives on parties***

What do civil society organizations think of political parties? In the space below, put some of the things you have heard or imagine would come to mind of someone active in civil society when thinking of political parties.

1.

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2.

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3.

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4.

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### Questions to consider

How do you think people form these perceptions? Do you think they're accurate? Why/why not? How do the media cover political parties? Does that contribute to these perceptions?

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Perhaps you've identified that many CSOs have similarly negative perceptions of political parties—"they are all corrupt and power-hungry, uninterested in representing citizens." CSOs can be resistant to working with parties for these reasons, or worried they will be viewed as partisan, even though, if done constructively, it could help them achieve their mission through improved policies on particular issues, or by generally improving the democratic processes. It is useful to understand their perspective when exploring the possibility of working together in some way.

Regardless of our positive or negative perceptions, CSO actions and opinions are an integral part of today's political landscape and savvy parties acknowledge this. The purpose of this workbook is to address that reality and figure out if there is a way to work with it.

But before we get into that, what exactly is "civil society?" Civil society comes in many shapes and sizes. Political philosophers from Hegel to Marx to Diamond offer a myriad of definitions, but no one can quite agree. What is your concept of civil society?



### Activity 3: What is civil society?

#### *Objective: To define civil society*

In the space below, write down four types of organizations that you know of that you would consider “civil society.”

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_



#### Questions to consider

What do these organizations have in common? What is different about them? Based on this, what is your definition of “civil society?”

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Viewed from the broadest perspective, civil society includes any organized group that is not government and not the private sector. Under this definition, political parties are civil society, too. For the purpose of this workbook, though, the term “civil society organizations” (CSOs) will refer to organized groups—outside government, the private sector and political parties—that represent a wide range of interests and ties around

**working definition of civil society**  
Organized groups—outside government, the private sector and political parties that represent a wide range of interests and ties around which citizens voluntarily organize themselves to achieve a common objective.



which citizens voluntarily organize themselves to achieve a common objective.

CSOs can be organized around just about every activity and issue to advocate for change or just to discuss the matter of interest among members. They might be social (a soccer club) or religious in nature (a church group), they might advocate public policy positions or provide services to underserved people or research academic topics. CSOs can be officially registered groups or organizations such as “think tanks” or informal organizations such as a neighborhood association, women’s group, youth or student groups, business or media association. In addition, it should be noted that some people make a distinction between organizations run by volunteers and “professional” organizations with paid staff, for example, neighborhood soccer team versus the Chamber of Commerce.

For parties, the challenge about CSOs today is that some work in the public sphere in similar ways to political parties. Usually, this is limited to advocating for and helping to develop policy solutions, but in some cases, CSOs can even run candidates. This can be unsettling to political parties that are already the focus of criticism from CSOs, and now must face CSOs as competitors for elected office.

On the other hand, it can also be an opportunity for parties, as we explore in the next section.

### ***What’s In It For Us?***

Partnering with civil society organizations has potential benefits for many political parties. All parties have limited time, people and money. Some common challenges in parties are training new leaders, developing platforms and informed policies and improving communication with constituents. Savvy parties have figured out that if they go about it carefully, CSOs can help fill in some of these gaps. How? Depending on the particular situation in your country and party, here are some ideas on how working with CSOs can help your party improve its internal democracy, transparency and outreach and ultimately help the party more effectively solve citizen problems.

#### Improved internal democracy

Parties can ask CSOs to help a party improve its platforms, policies and skills, and to become more dynamic, effective, and professional by supplying expertise on policy

analysis, platform development and legislative initiatives; organizing policy debates and issue forums with party representatives, elected officials, and candidates in relation to elections, pending legislation, or emerging public priorities; providing polling and surveying services; and providing training to members of a political party to increase the skills of party leaders (negotiations, communications, management).

#### Improved transparency

Parties can ask CSOs to help improve party transparency and internal democracy by monitoring internal party elections; providing experts on ethics codes to help develop/improve the party’s code.

#### **Working together for internal democracy...**

Freedom of Information AC (Mexico) and Common Cause (USA) provide political parties with issue based policy positions and draft legislation regarding their specific advocacy issues (electoral reform, access to information)—for free. [www.commoncause.org](http://www.commoncause.org); [www.limac.org.mx](http://www.limac.org.mx).



## Improved outreach

Parties can ask CSOs to help parties understand citizen concerns and communicate with constituents by including articles in CSO newsletters; by highlighting legislation sponsored by the party; by inviting parties to events; by encouraging members to vote for party candidates; by providing volunteers to help mobilize the vote in elections, to build up party membership during non-election periods, and to help with other party work; by increasing political participation of citizens; by encouraging political participation; by providing voter education services; and by publicly endorsing a political party in order to encourage members of the public to join.

### **Working together for transparency & internal democracy...**

Citizen Participation (Dominican Republic) monitors internal party elections, reducing internal fears of fraud and increasing the public's perception of party transparency. [www.pciudadana.com](http://www.pciudadana.com).

### ***What's In It For Them?***

Similarly, parties can help CSOs. While CSOs can form opinions and try to influence policy, normally they cannot implement it themselves. So when there is a party that espouses the same ideas that they do, working together in some way can be very interesting and allow them to more effectively achieve a common goal.

Where there is a common cause, the CSO may see collaboration with a political party as an opportunity to advance its interests. As part of the collaboration, the party might propose legislation, publicly discuss and deepen public understanding about an issue or propose to increase public funding for an issue. In some cases, a party could provide volunteers and members to advocate a common platform or issue campaign, such as pension reform, or improving secondary education.

### **Working together for outreach...**

*Transparencia* (Peru) hosts multi-party debates on key national issues in Peru, allowing candidates to show how they differ from their competitors. Rock the Vote (USA) hosts multi-party debates on youth issues, exposing candidates to young voters. [www.transparencia.org.pe](http://www.transparencia.org.pe); [www.rockthevote.com](http://www.rockthevote.com).

Of course some CSOs choose not to work with parties at all. Some CSOs prefer to work with many parties to maintain their non-partisanship; others prefer to work with just the one party whose values match theirs. By carefully matching your party interests to the CSOs, your party can convert what many parties perceive as a problem into a positive opportunity to leverage resources to solve citizen problems.



### Activity 3: What are my party's goals?

**Objective: To identify possible interest in engaging civil society**

In the column A below, write down three or four of your party's current goals. This can be broad (e.g. win the next election) or very specific (e.g. find a space for the next party conference). Then, in the column B, jot down some ideas on how you think one or several civil society organizations might be able to help your party reach that goal.

A) Party Goal	B) How might CSOs help you reach the goal?
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____
4. _____	_____



#### Questions to consider

Does your party have a statement of goals? Has your party recently undergone any strategic planning? If so, look over those documents and think about how civil society might be able to help the party reach those goals.

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Your party can also do a more systematic analysis than the exercise above using any number of strategic planning tools. For example, you could refer to a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) matrix and see where civil society could help your party mitigate its weaknesses or better leverage its strengths in order to help the party reach its goals. Another idea is to use NDI's Triangle of Best Practices of Effective Parties<sup>6</sup>. Assess the party's performance in each of the practices and identify practices that civil society organizations may be able to help with.

Finally...

You should now be able to define civil society and the general benefits for parties and CSOs to work together. When you are considering working with specific CSOs, it is important to begin by really understanding your potential partner—by investigating, as we see in the next section.

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<sup>6</sup> See *Best Practices for Effective Parties*, NDI 2003.



## Determine Who’s Out There: Investigate

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### ***Objective: To identify CSOs in your area***

If your party has determined it wants to better engage CSOs in the area, it is important to understand which organizations exist and what they do. Most CSOs have specific missions which guide all their activities and some of those may be complementary to your party’s values, platforms and goals. Let’s see how much you already know about your community.

### **Activity 4: Community Mapping Exercise**

#### ***Objective: Identify organizations of interest***

Write down as many CSOs that you can think of in your neighborhood (Column A). Write down the type of organization (e.g., think tank, service provider, professional association, etc.) in Column B. Finally, write down the organization’s mission—or what you think their primary goal is (Column C). See the examples below.

A) Organization	B) Type	C) Mission
<i>e.g., Breast Cancer Assoc</i>	<i>Service provider</i>	<i>Provide health screenings for low-income women</i>
<i>e.g., Agricultural Trade Union</i>	<i>Professional association</i>	<i>To negotiate and advocate for better wages and working conditions for its members</i>
<i>e.g., Education Policy Reform group</i>	<i>Think tank</i>	<i>Devise and put forward alternate public policies for education improvement</i>

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### Questions to consider

Is there anything that surprises you about your list? How could you find out more about these organizations?

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To investigate is to carry out research into a subject, in this case to research a CSO. Here are some ways to do a more comprehensive investigation and community map:

- Consult a directory of community groups in your area (e.g., *The Directory of NGOs Linked with Public Policies* produced by CIPPEC in Argentina, [www.cippec.org](http://www.cippec.org));
- Get input from members of your party, including information about the groups they belong to. Ask them at a party event to provide a list of groups and contacts;
- Review lists of attendees from party functions – include a line asking for the attendee’s organizational affiliation and then look for representatives from CSOs;
- Contact groups your party has already collaborated with in the past;
- Review the government registry of CSOs;
- Conduct a survey;
- Research on the Internet.

### investigate

*verb: 1 carry out a systematic or formal inquiry into (an incident or allegation) so as to establish the truth. 2 carry out research into (a subject). 3 make a search or systematic inquiry.*

Compact Oxford English Dictionary

Finally...

You now have identified the organizations in your community. In the next section, you will learn techniques for communicating or dialoguing with the organizations, for the purpose of gathering more information and building relationships that may lead to collaboration.



## Talk to Each Other: Communicate and Dialogue

### ***Objective: Identify methods to communicate and dialogue with CSOs***

If you have identified CSOs in your area that might be of interest to the party, you can start by getting to know them and their staff and introducing your party and your members to the organization. Thinking about this strategically, you might begin to share or exchange information or ideas with those CSOs without necessarily entering into any formal agreements. Obviously, you're not going to want to contact every single CSO in your area. For example, is there a CSO connected to another political party on the list? Or a CSO that you know is in opposition to your party platforms and positions? You probably don't want to waste time with them. Are there any CSOs related to your party or the party international on the list? You might want to contact them to find out more about them and see if they have complementary interests to your party. There are probably many organizations in between.

**communicate**

*verb: share or exchange information or ideas*

Compact Oxford English Dictionary

Some CSOs might only want to ally with one party. For example the Ecuadorian think-tank CORDES is affiliated with the former Popular Democracy Party. The policy papers they write tend to be ones that this particular party is interested in. Some CSOs may want to work with a broad spectrum of parties. Citizen Participation in the Dominican Republic is an example. Of course, some CSOs may not want to work with any political parties. Good investigation and communication is essential to enable your party to decide which organization is best suited for active collaboration.

#### **Working together for internal democracy...**

The National Economic Research Center (Guatemala) and the Center for American Progress (USA) develop policy briefs on key national issues to be used by like minded political parties—for free. [www.americanprogress.org](http://www.americanprogress.org); [www.cien.org.gt](http://www.cien.org.gt).

At its most basic, to dialogue entails getting to know people outside your group. It doesn't need to have any particular objective or purpose, but certainly any party seeking to collaborate with CSOs would start by communicating with the organization. This can include having a meeting between leaders, going to CSO events, inviting them to yours, putting them on your mailing list, and vice versa, etc.

Once you have a good amount of information, you probably are ready to start discussing substantive ideas in a more formal exchange of information or dialogue. To dialogue is to take part in discussion directed towards exploration of a subject or resolution of a problem. For example, if

#### **Working together for outreach...**

Membership organizations such as trade unions often mobilize membership to advocate on policies of concern to their constituency. The Trade Union Congress (UK) serves this role as an aggregator of individually trade unions into one large confederation. Visit the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions-ICFTU to identify trade unions in your country. [www.tuc.org.uk](http://www.tuc.org.uk); [www.icftu.org](http://www.icftu.org).



you know that the CSO works on educational reform and that is an issue of interest to the party, you might want to invite the CSO leaders to present their ideas to the party educational committee.

Beginning a discussion on topics of mutual interest doesn't need to imply a partnership, although it can become the basis for a future collaboration between your party and the CSO.

Another example of a dialogue would be if the party is interested in increasing youth members, has identified universities in the area and begun to communicate, the party could meet with youth to hear their views on the most important problems facing them today.

**dialogue**

*verb: take part in discussion directed towards exploration of a subject or resolution of a problem*

Compact Oxford English Dictionary

What ideas do you have on how to communicate and dialogue with CSOs?

**Activity 5: How will you communicate or dialogue?**

***Objective: Identify possible ways to communicate and dialogue with CSOs***

In the space below, select three organizations from the mapping exercise that you think your party may be interested in (a target population, information on an issue, training skills etc.) and enter the name of the CSO in Column A. In Column B, identify several ways the party could contact the CSO to gain more information about them. You might choose only to communicate with some, but with others to go a step further and begin a dialogue. Be specific in your suggestions.

A) CSO of potential interest

B) How your party might communicate or dialogue with the CSO

*e.g., Educational Policy Reform Group*

*Send information on party positions on education; attend CSO's public forums on education; meet with leaders to learn more about CSO mission and objectives*

1.

2.

3.



### Questions to consider

What resources does your party need to communicate with the CSOs? Does communicating or dialoguing with CSOs seem like something your party could

do?

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**Initiating dialogues with CSOs can help your party's immediate outreach efforts and can also be an investment in potential future activities. When you have a specific need in the future, you'll already have a relationship with the groups and people who may be able to help.**



## Take Action Together: Collaborate

### **Objective: Define the benefits of collaboration**

If your party has actively investigated, communicated with and dialogued with CSOs, you probably have a good idea if any of the CSOs have overlapping or complementary interests with your party. This might suggest possible areas of collaboration.

Collaboration is to work jointly on an activity or project. The collaboration may be one time, or it may be ongoing. The party and the CSO would need to have complementary interests but could collaborate with the same objective or different objectives. Parties that survey CSOs in their region and

**collaborate**

*verb: work jointly on an activity or project.*

Compact Oxford English Dictionary

dialogue with them will have a good idea of which organizations might be good partners for collaboration.

One example of collaboration might be that the party develops platforms on an issue which the CSO is advocating for and the CSO mobilizes its members to give the party electoral support. In this case, the party's objective is to increase electoral support and the CSO's objective is to promote an issue that is important to them. Each group has its own objective, yet because they have similar interests, they are able to collaborate successfully.

Another fruit of collaboration might be CSO endorsements for a candidate. In some countries,

CSOs such as unions or legislative monitoring organizations might publicly endorse a party or candidate in newspapers. Achieving such an endorsement probably won't happen without beginning with a dialogue about issues between, for example, the candidates and to CSO leaders or members. An endorsement from a CSO combined with communication from the party to the CSO

#### **Working together for internal democracy...**

Emily's List (USA) provides campaign training, staff and financial assistance to women candidates who advocate similar issues—for free. [www.emilyslist.org](http://www.emilyslist.org).

members on the issues of mutual concern can help a party gain votes.

How do you identify common interests and possible opportunities for collaboration?

### **Activity 6: Finding common ground**

#### **Objective: to identify interests and ideas for collaboration.**

Write your three organizations in column A again. Or choose new ones if you'd like. This time, identify your party's possible interest in each CSO (Column B). Then, identify the CSOs possible interest in the party (Column C). Finally, write down some ways your party and the CSO could collaborate, considering your complementary interests (Column D). If you don't think the interests are complementary, go back to your community map and select a different CSO that has interests complementary to your party.



A) CSO	B) Party's interest	C) CSO's interest	C) Collaboration idea
<i>e.g., Educational Policy Reform Group</i>	<i>We seek information on options for improving secondary education.</i>	<i>They seek to influence educational policy.</i>	<i>Invite CSO to present statistics and research to party's education committee to aid in platform development.</i>
<i>e.g., Agricultural Trade Union</i>	<i>We want to increase party membership in rural areas.</i>	<i>They seek to improve working conditions for workers</i>	<i>Ask CSO to organize meeting in rural area for party to hear from CSO members about their concerns.</i>
1.			
2.			

3.



Questions to consider

Would some type of specific training be useful for your party leaders? Does your party need more expertise in a particular subject area to develop a party platform or legislative proposal? Are there civil society transparency initiatives that could help to improve public perception of your party?

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**Many political parties and organizations find working together to be an important and useful way to increase power and stretch resources. Dynamic engagement with civil society can help maximize resources and can lead to more support for your political party by creating a higher level of positive public perception. By forging alliances with civic groups to achieve certain goals, political parties can broaden their base and ensure that their platform is more relevant.**

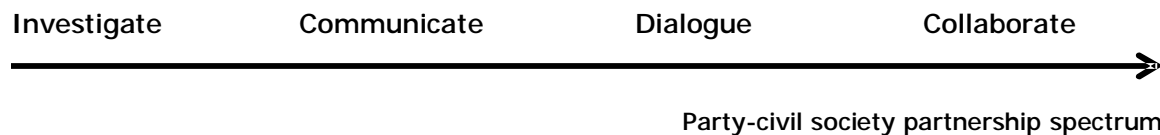


## Putting it all together

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Hopefully you now have a better idea of the benefits and challenges of working together with civil society organizations. By taking the time to think through the process in an organized manner your party or organization will be better prepared to work together in a way that benefits all the partners. By taking the time to lay a strong foundation, the collaboration you form will stand a better chance of achieving the objectives and surviving future challenges.

To sum up, there are various ways that parties can engage with civil society depending on the interests of the party and the CSOs in the area. These ways of engaging can range from low level contact to high level contact: from investigating to collaborating. The range of possibilities looks something like this:



Think about the characteristics of the CSOs your party might investigate as opposed to the characteristics of CSOs the party would decide to collaborate with. What level of trust is necessary between your party and a CSO for your party to consider investigating or communicating with that CSO? How similar does the CSO's mission need to be to the mission of the party in order to communicate or dialogue with that CSO? What if the party is considering collaborating with that CSO? Do you need a higher level of trust with the CSO in order for the party to consider collaborating with that CSO?

Making the decision to engage with civil society organizations is not simply a yes or no decision, but rather a carefully thought-through decision based on the strategic goals of the party.

Let's try this out in the next exercise as you consider who to work with, and how, in order to realize your party's objectives.

### Activity 7: Building a party strategy for civil society engagement

***Objective: To identify the right partners to begin building effective solutions to citizen concerns.***

Read the description below of the problems that the Republic of San Juan is facing.

*The situation:*

After World War II, the Republic of San Juan experienced authoritarian rule. In 1975, a violent urban guerrilla movement forced San Juan's leader to cede control of the government to a military junta. Democracy returned in 1980, and has persisted despite



numerous challenges. In 2005, the Indigenist Party won national elections and ended 100 years of political control previously held by the Liberal and Conservative parties prior to WWII and since 1980.

GDP of the Republic of San Juan is up, but inequality is growing. The top concerns of citizens are poverty, education and jobs. Half of the country's population is under 18, and many of those youth live in poverty. More and more, people want to know why, if the GDP is up, is poverty growing? Why is the quality of education so low that the nation's young people are not prepared for the available jobs? Why are there not more jobs if the economy is growing? Wealthy people are moving outside the capital. People are disgusted with parties and say parties never deliver. They are also tired of corruption.

The country is largely agricultural but is shifting to a more industrial/service economy, but there is little job training.

There are a number of political parties in the country. Read their descriptions below and select the party you want to join. Don't worry if you can't find a party that reflects your interests—this is just an exercise!

*The parties:*

1. The Indigenist Party was formed prior to the last elections two years ago, and some of its members have defected to other parties. Currently, the party has 15 seats in the legislature. In addition, several corruption scandals have weakened the party.
2. The Nationalist Party has many seats in the legislature and is the most likely contender for the next President.
3. The Christian Democrat Party was established just two years ago and has a small presence in the Congress, but is strong in local government.
4. The Liberal Party holds the presidency. It is particularly strong in the southern part of the country, including Buenas Aguas, where most of the economic production occurs. For many years, this was one of the two most powerful parties in the country.
5. The Conservative Party leaders are all prominent female politicians. It is strong in the northern part of the country. For many years, this was one of the two most powerful parties in the country.

Which party did you join? Write the party name here:

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### Questions to consider

Now that you have picked a party and now that you know the problems your country faces, what do you imagine your party's positions are on poverty, education and jobs? Write your thoughts below. Think about who the party's constituents are. Of these three, which issue/s do you think is most important to the party constituents? Why? What ideas do you imagine your party will propose to solve some of these problems? Be creative.

*Primary constituents: E.g., rural, indigenous, impoverished,*

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*Party position on poverty: E.g., it's wrong. Wealth should be redistributed. Natural resource extraction should be nationalized.*

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*Party position on education: E.g., the wealthy get good education. The education system is too western. Need to change to emphasize indigenous values.*

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*Party position on jobs: E.g., need to create more jobs in the rural sector. Need to have language training so that indigenous can get service jobs in the capital.*

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Your party is concerned about the plight of the country. The party has limited time, resources and money, and party leaders are considering engaging with civil society in an effort to find more effective solutions to the country's problems. The party leaders agreed to start out with a thorough investigation and have named a civil society engagement committee to do the research. You are the head of this committee!

Review the draft memo below on the results of your committee investigation.

**MEMO**

To: Party Leaders

From: Me

Re: Results of CSO investigation in San Juan

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The civil society committee was tasked with researching the mission and activities of the most active CSOs in the Republic of San Juan. This is what we found:

- Equality NOW, a women's rights advocacy group with chapters in every province. EQNOW trains women community leaders in organization and advocacy skills, including training women to identify and solve community problems. EQNOW also advocates for equal pay for men and women.
- Youth for a Corruption Free Republic of San Juan is an advocacy group. They exposed the corruption in Aguas Buenas. While relatively inexperienced, the members have a lot of energy and passion. They are currently discussing what their next project will be.
- The Workers Union is the industrial and agricultural union. The union offers continuing vocational training to its members, researches employment statistics and advocates for the rights of its workers.
- The San Juan Chamber of Commerce is a grouping of the most powerful businesses in the country. They donate funds to many organizations, especially youth-employment and schools. They have a large influence on the Minister of Finance.
- The National Indigenous Association (NIA) is a loosely organized umbrella organization that groups all indigenous groups in San Juan. NIA advocates for issues of interest to this population. It has the power to mobilize hundreds of members in very little time. However, recently it has been a bit disorganized.
- The Liberal Fellowship Foundation is a privately-funded organization that shares in the objectives of the Liberal Party. The Foundation develops policy papers,



conducts research and organizes international conferences on topics related to Liberal ideology.

As head of the committee, it is your job to advise the party leaders on whether to engage with the CSOs on the list and, if so, how.

First, circle 1-3 CSOs mentioned in the memo that you think might have complementary interests to those of the party. Write those organizations in column A below. In column B, write what you think their interests might be on the issues that citizens are concerned with in San Juan. Finally, indicate in column C whether you think the party should further investigate, communicate, dialogue or collaborate with that CSO.

CSOs of interest

A) CSO name	B) What is the interest of this CSO in poverty, education and jobs?	C) Should the party Investigate? Communicate? Dialogue? Collaborate?
1.		
2.		
3.		

In column C above, did you indicate the party should collaborate with any CSOs? If so, write those in Column D below. In column E, write your idea of what your party and the CSO could do together to help solve citizen concerns about poverty, education and/or jobs. If it's helpful, refer to earlier sections of this workbook for ideas on different types of collaboration. Of course, you can always advise the party not to work with a particular CSO, but be specific about your reasons. Keep in mind that the party leaders were not unanimous in their support for engaging with civil society. Some of them do not think the party should work with CSOs because the CSOs always criticized the party. If you did not select any CSOs to collaborate with, what were your reasons?



Potential party-CSO collaboration

D) CSO name	E) Describe potential collaboration
1.	
2.	
3.	

Now you are ready to advise party leaders on how to engage with civil society in San Juan. Finish your memo in the space below.

Memo to party leaders cont.

As you can see from the list of CSOs, there is a wide range of organizations active in San Juan.

Our party would like to improve our country. Citizens have identified poverty, education and jobs and the most important issues facing them.

As requested by party leaders, this committee has considered the organizations above, and has made some recommendations on whether the party should further investigate, communicate, dialogue or collaborate with those organizations.

Here are our recommendations, the rationale behind them, and how we suggest the party implement the recommendations:

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Good job! Now you are ready to send the memo to the party leaders.



### Questions to consider



How would your answers have been different if you had selected a different party? What if all the party leaders were supportive of engaging with civil society? What if none were? How realistic is this scenario?

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## Review

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**Y**ou are now ready to help your party increase its outreach to civil society. Hopefully this workbook can help your party consider the possibility of working with certain CSOs to find solutions to citizen concerns.

### ***Objectives and Goals of Workbook***

Referring back to the objectives of this workbook, you should now be able to:

- ü Describe the benefits of engaging with civil society
- ü Identify the appropriate techniques for engaging with CSOs
- ü Develop a strategy to collaborate with civil society partners

Finally...

Effective parties collaborate with civil society to solve citizen concerns through a regular and systematic process to identify, communicate and dialogue. By engaging with civic groups, a party can expand its reach across the community and gain access to much-needed resources. Voters recognize that when a party is making good efforts to solve citizen concerns, there is a good chance that after the party wins elections, its governing practices will be similar. Based on the experience of parties all over the world, implementing best practices of internal democracy, transparency and outreach pave the way for longevity and success.

Good luck!

## Appendix

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### Activity 7: Group Instructions

*For groups: Assign participants to either a political party or a civil society group, with a minimum of 3 people in each party or civic group. Explain that the objective of the exercise is to communicate, dialogue or collaborate with the civil society organizations.*

*Each team will get 1 point for investigating, 3 points for communicating, 5 points with dialoguing and 10 points for each agreement to collaborate. The winning party and civic organization will be asked to present their results.*

*Stage I: Hand out the negotiation tips and review with the group. (20 – 30 minutes)*

*Stage II: Internal Party and Civil Society Meetings (15-20 minutes)*

- *Agree on the party's or civic organization's ideal goals and objectives.*
- *Thinking of potential civil society partnerships, identify any non-negotiable issues.*
- *Choose a leader, members of the negotiating team and members responsible for ratifying any agreement. It is highly recommended that the designated leader is not a member of the negotiating team, so that the leader can break a deadlock in reaching an agreement.*

*Stage III: Informal Discussions (40 minutes, preferably over a coffee break)*

- *Investigate organizations or parties*
- *Communicate and dialogue to sound out potential partners.*
- *Return to the original party or civic group and hold internal talks within the party and civic groups to approve partners.*

*Stage IV: Negotiations among party-civil society partners (45-60 minutes)*

- *Collaborators should identify at least one action on which they will collaborate. Each group should be prepared to explain how that action will advance their group's objective.*
- *The individuals actually engaged in the dialogue should keep track of who they met with and know the mission of the organization.*
- *All: Nominate a spokesperson from the party or civil society to give the presentation.*

*Stage V: Winning presentations (3 minutes per group)*



*The party and civic organization that has the most points will address the entire group. The presentation should include the following information:*

- *An overview of the party or civic organization, including what its interests are.*
- *Lessons learned from communication and dialogue*
- *An explanation of each collaborative agreement. At least one action which they will collaborate on should be identified. how that action will advance each group's objective should be explained.*



### *Questions to consider*

*What were the original demands or proposals of each group? What was negotiated? What did you gain and what did you have to give up in the process? How could an effective working relationship be maintained, following initial negotiation?*



## Skills for negotiating with civil society

*Objective: Generate agreement among organizations based on interests*

Negotiation is one of the most common aspects of life, even more so of politics. We negotiate at all levels, at all moments over many things: from when to take the kids to school to alliances, coalitions, governments and constitutions. Negotiation is an important part of collaborating or building a coalition with civil society.

What is negotiation?



Questions to consider

Did your definition include “coming to agreement?” That is not negotiation! Negotiation is to put interests on the table.

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Negotiation is what happens when two groups have interests in conflict but also have a zone of possibility where the differences may be resolved. While it is possible that through negotiation groups might resolve disputes and agree upon courses of action, *coming to agreement* is not an inherent part of negotiation. Rather, negotiation is simply putting interests on the table. Negotiation is a daily and permanent pursuit, the key to which is preparation.



### ***Decide whether to negotiate or not.***

First of all, let's be clear: negotiation is not the only choice available to us. But understanding how to find political solutions through negotiation can be very useful.

What happens if we don't negotiate? What is our best alternative? Stay as is? Or try to get something more another way? What can we get, and in exchange for what? What's the cost of negotiating in the eyes of our followers, allies, adversaries and public opinion? What's the cost of success? What's the cost of failure? We must always remember that negotiation is an alternative to what we are already doing and furthermore it can bring with it costs and benefits.

In the case of parties, some scenarios could be: What is better, to lose alone, or to win together? Or, is it better to lose alone than to lose together? Presumably, it is always better to win alone, but it is not always possible. Is it worth the risk?

One tool that can help a party decide whether to negotiate or not is the strategic planning SWOT matrix that establishes the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to negotiating. This can help the party rapidly identify priorities for negotiating as well as to understand the internal and external perceptions of negotiation.

If you have another alternative, think it through!

### ***Prepare for the negotiation internally***

Preparation is the most important component of a negotiation because it's under your control. Once you enter the room, the dynamic process no longer will be under your control.

- Prepare—know what you want and learn as much as you can about the civic group's interests;
- Determine what kind of negotiation your party wants—one-time, ongoing, win/win, or win/lose; and
- Ensure you have a clear mandate and clear operating guidelines from your party.

Know why you're negotiating

Identify specific objectives for the negotiation and make sure they're clear to everyone on your negotiation team.

¿What do we really want? Watch out! Negotiation is just one alternative for what we already do. Having an absolutely clear mission and objectives is one of the fundamental requirements for all political activities, especially for a coherent negotiation.

Identify what is negotiable and what is not

One easy way to compare the positions of the negotiating parties is to create a "traffic light matrix." Write down the points of view of each negotiating group on a piece of paper divided in three: red, yellow and green. In the red section, put the positions where there is complete disagreement. In the yellow, put the points where there are some commonalities, and in the green section, put the points which are clearly negotiable. Don't share this with the other side!



Doing this before negotiating can help you with your strategy. For example, the points on which there is no possibility of agreement—the red section—if neither group cedes, there will be no agreement. But better yet, with the “traffic light matrix” you can pay “cheaply” for “expensive” agreements, in other words you can cede green points in exchange for red ones.

Decide who negotiates

The negotiation team should have complete responsibility for the negotiation, including ensuring that the negotiation complies with internal party rules and regulations.

It might seem like the right thing to do would be to put the top party leaders on the negotiation team. Be careful about this. Consider whether there are any internal divisions or competing factions in the party. If you don't include representatives from these factions on the negotiation team, you might face internal opposition to the negotiation. For that reason, it's important to incorporate all factions of the party in the negotiation in order to not leave internal weaknesses. Finally, identify the individuals most logical to negotiate with civil society. For example, some parties have civil society or outreach liaisons or committees.

The negotiation team needs:

- Coherence. While you want to be strategic about who you choose as part of the negotiating team, don't forget that the negotiating team itself has to be able to work together.
- A clear mandate. That is to say, the tasks and objectives that the negotiators undertake.
- Line of authority. Clear instructions from the party leaders regarding the limits of the negotiation and mechanisms of communicating to the leaders.

Research, research, research!

Do your homework and understand the others at your table. Also understand how your party members and the public will view the negotiation and anything that may come out of it.

Understand the rules of the game (internal and external)

Before going into a negotiation, understand the rules of the game both within your negotiating team and that of your opponents. What is *really* going on?

Think about win-win

Prior to the negotiation, try to imagine you are the other side. What do you think are the interests of the other side? What do you think they really want? Might this be compatible with what your side wants? If both sides are able to come out of the negotiation feeling like they have won something important, you may have a good basis for continuing relations. On the contrary, if you leave the negotiation having crushed the other side, your future possibility of negotiation with them may be compromised.

### ***More preparation: Negotiate the negotiation with the other side***

Public or private?

Before anything else, and preferably through preliminary nonpublic conversations, agree with the other side whether the negotiation will be public, private or secret. It's also good to establish agreement on



how you will communicate to the public and the media before negotiating. For example, determine beforehand if both sides will keep any agreements quiet until the entire negotiation is complete, or if you will divulge them partially as they occur.

Negotiations can generate tremendous expectations such that failed negotiations can have a high cost for all sides. It's prudent to negotiate beforehand how to stop negotiations if it appears that they will not be a success.

Who negotiates and where?

Both sides should have the same ability to make decisions. Also, having friends on both sides of the negotiating table can reduce tension and increase the possibility of agreement.

In sum, seek the best physical environment and individuals to facilitate results.

What is the agenda?

Prior to the negotiation, agree on an agenda.

Determining the agenda: what to negotiate and in which order?

The order of the agenda can affect negotiations, especially if the public finds out.

How much time do we have?

In some negotiations, one side benefits from resolving the conflict right away. If time is on your side, you may be able to make gains.

You can use the SWOT strategic planning matrix to help determine whether time is on your side and identify your party priorities. Review each strength, weakness, opportunity and threat and ask What would happen if we don't do anything? Would things improve or worsen? If that thing would improve over time if the party did nothing, then add a + sign next to it. If it's going to stay the same, put an = sign next to it. If it will get worse over time if the party does nothing, then put a - next to it.

For example, if a doctor were evaluating illnesses, there are some things that aren't going to change over time (=), some that will get better over time—that will heal themselves (+) and others that will get worse unless the doctor intervenes (-). Doing this exercise can help the party focus the negotiation on resolving those threats which will get worse over time, leaving for the end those things which won't change over time if nothing is done, and never mind negotiating those which will disappear on their own.

In politics, the external environment and pressures strongly affect the negotiation. It's not like negotiating a car. Your negotiation may be dependent on an electoral calendar, for example. Once that date passes, the coalition is of no use.

## ***Finally—negotiate!***

Here are some things to consider during your negotiation:



- § Discuss interests, not positions—and seek out common ground  
**Most of us do not think about our interests, but rather the position we have on a topic. This limits our ability to negotiate and to reach agreement in a way that enables us to build for the future—along with our counterpart.**
- § Discuss problems, not people
- § Look for alternatives and creative ways to advance the negotiation
- § Build a relationship, where feasible—this enables trust to develop
- § Use mediators if necessary  
**Sometimes a third party that both sides respect can moderate the demands and attitudes of the groups negotiating. Guarantees are fundamental to negotiations such that if in any moment any party considers that the other party is not holding up to the agreement, there is a way to appeal or deal with it. Mediators can help tremendously in this.**
- § Write down the agreement  
**Always begin and end a negotiation reading and signing an agreement of the areas you agreed upon. And of course, establish what was agreed upon and how it was agreed upon. Whether or not this is a formal, signed document, take notes on what was agreed and begin and end each meeting with a review of the agreements. Negotiation cannot be based solely on what the negotiators recall.**

Okay, now let's negotiate.



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