POLITICAL-PROCESS MONITORING

ACTIVIST TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

Kourtney Pompi
Lacey Kohlmoos

National Democratic Institute

POLITICAL-PROCESS MONITORING

Activist Tools and Techniques

Kourtney Pompi   **Lacey Kohlmoos**

National Democratic Institute

The National Democratic Institute (NDI) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, nongovernmental organization that responds to the aspirations of people around the world to live in democratic societies that recognize and promote basic human rights.

Since its founding in 1983, NDI and its local partners have worked to support and strengthen democratic institutions and practices by strengthening political parties, civic organizations and parliaments, safeguarding elections, and promoting citizen participation, openness and accountability in government.

With staff members and volunteer political practitioners from more than 100 nations, NDI brings together individuals and groups to share ideas, knowledge, experiences and expertise. Partners receive broad exposure to best practices in international democratic development that can be adapted to the needs of their own countries. NDI's multinational approach reinforces the message that while there is no single democratic model, certain core principles are shared by all democracies.

The Institute's work upholds the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It also promotes the development of institutionalized channels of communications among citizens, political institutions and elected officials, and strengthens their ability to improve the quality of life for all citizens. For more information about NDI, please visit www.ndi.org.

2030 M St NW Fifth Floor
Washington, DC 20036
Telephone: 202-728-5500
Fax: 202-728-5520
Website: www.ndi.org

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

Foreword

Long-term democratic development requires citizen activism as a means of building a culture of accountability and ensuring that the government works to benefit citizens. Citizens are essential to democratic governance. They give life and meaning to democratic principles and the institutions designed to create pluralism, accountability and limits on government power. For more than 25 years, The National Democratic Institute (NDI) has worked to increase the political activism of citizens and the capacity of local civil society organizations (CSOs).

When organizing and voicing their preferences, citizens learn the art of "citizenship" and become more willing to participate and better able to make constructive contributions to the political process. In addition, citizen activism helps institutionalize participatory political practices and maintain the "space" necessary for such participation. As a result, democracy itself is strengthened.

NDI recognizes that citizen-centered activism – driven by real community needs and desires – is a powerful transformative force; it can help transform how politics is practiced and the quality of life in communities. Citizens the world over want to improve their well being and are often interested in taking peaceful action, when they believe that they can make a difference. Citizens that care about an issue and have the opportunity to express their "voice" in decision-making, will readily participate in efforts to foster positive, lasting change.

Citizens must therefore understand ideas about citizenship, politics and government. They need knowledge to make decisions about policy choices and the proper use of authority, along with the skills to voice their concerns, act collectively and hold public officials (i.e., elected representatives, civil servants and appointed leaders) accountable. At the same time, they need access to information about government actions, and need to be free to organize without government interference. Without the active involvement of citizens in political life, government power can be abused and used to benefit a narrow segment of society. Helping ensure that government actually works for the public good requires informed, organized, active and peaceful citizen participation.

The Citizen Participation team helps NDI staff members develop, implement and evaluate effective citizen participation programs worldwide. By providing a global perspective and functional expertise, the Citizen Participation team assists those colleagues on the front lines with identifying program opportunities, maneuvering around known pitfalls and drawing lessons from each experience. Much of the work focuses on empowering citizens and increasing their

sustained political participation to help ensure government accountability, responsiveness and transparency. With the assistance of NDI, hundreds of citizen groups have engaged in different types of activism including awareness-raising, organizing, advocacy and political-process monitoring.

This guide was developed by NDI's Citizen Participation team and primarily explores the work that the Institute and its partner groups have conducted across five types of political-process monitoring – legislative monitoring; budget monitoring, budget advocacy and expenditure tracking; shadow reporting; monitoring government follow-through; and election campaign-related monitoring. The guide is based upon qualitative research conducted over a one-year period that included a desk review of NDI program materials and interviews with select NDI staff members and local partners. The guide also benefited from research visits to Mexico and Georgia where the team conducted in-depth interviews with NDI country teams, local partners and program beneficiaries.

NDI's Citizen Participation team received funding from the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) to develop the guide. Though specifically targeted at NDI staff and partners, the guide could be used as a resource and manual for any organization implementing its own political-process monitoring program or supporting the monitoring work of others. The guide provides users with the following:

- An explanation of NDI's approach to structuring and maintaining partnerships;

- The opportunities and challenges of designing and implementing political-process monitoring initiatives.

- A review of NDI's political-process monitoring programs;

- An assortment of tools used by NDI to deliver assistance and its partners to carry out political-process monitoring programs;

- Vignettes and case studies of NDI political-process monitoring programs; and

- A global overview of political-process monitoring initiatives.

Aaron Azelton
Director of Citizen Participation Programs
The National Democratic Institute
October 2010

ACAC – Albanian Coalition Against Corruption

AFORE – Administration for Pension Funds (*Administradoras de Fondos para el Retiro*)

AIR – American Institute for Research

Al Quds – Al Quds Center for Political Studies

APAC – Association for People with Cerebral Paralysis (*Asociación pro Personas con Parálisis Cerebral*)

AU – African Union

CBO – Community-Based Organization

CEDAW – Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

CISOMM – Civil Society Monitoring Mechanism

COAMEX – Mexican Coalition for the Rights of Disabled Persons (*Coalición México para los Derechos de las Personas con Discapacidad*)

COMESA – Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa

CONFE – Mexican Confederation of Organizations in Favor of People with Learning Disabilities (*Confederación Mexicana de Organizaciones en Favor de la Persona con Discapacidad Intelectual*)

CPDI-Pakistan – Center for Peace and Development Initiatives, Pakistan

CRPD – United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

CSCQBE – Civil Society Coalition for Quality Basic Education

CSO – Civil Society Organization

DGA – Democracy and Governance in Albania

DISCUSS – Democracy Initiative through Sustainable Community Discussion

DPO – Disabled Persons Organization

ENAR – European Network Against Racism

FOIA – Freedom of Information Act

FPPM – Forum for Popular Participation

GPA – Global Political Agreement

GYLA – Georgian Young Lawyers' Association

HIV/AIDS – Human Immunodeficiency Virus/ Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome

IBP – International Budget Partnership

ICCPR – International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

ICESCR – International Covenant on Social and Cultural Rights

ICRC – International Committee of the Red Cross

IMSS – Mexican Institute for Social Security (*Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social*)

INFONAVIT – National Institute for the Workers Housing Fund (*Instituto Fondo Nacional de la Vivienda para los Trabajadores*)

IPA – Interparty Political Agreement

IREX – International Research and Exchange Board

ISFED – International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy

ISSSTE – Institute for Safety and Social Services for State Workers (*Instituto de Seguridad y Servicios Sociales de los Trabajadores del Estado*)

IWRAW – International Women's Rights Action Watch

IWRAW Asia Pacific – International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific

JPM – Jordanian Parliament Monitor

KDI – Kosovo Democratic Institute

MA – Municipal Assembly

MDC – Movement for Democratic Change

MDC-M – Movement for Democratic Change - Mutambara

MDC-T – Movement for Democratic Change - Tsvangirai

MEJN – Malawi Economic Justice Network

MOU – Memorandum of Understanding

MP – Member of Parliament

NCA – National Constitutional Assembly

NDI – National Democratic Institute

NGO – Non-Governmental Organization

OCDM – Citizen Observatory for Disabilities in Mexico (*Observatorio Ciudadano por la Discapacidad en México*)

OCHA – United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

OHCHR – Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights

PDC – Partners for Democratic Change (aka Partners)

PEMEX – Mexican Petroleum (*Petréleos Mexicanos*)

SADC – Southern African Development Community

SEDENA – Secretary of National Defense (*Secretaria de la Defensa Nacional*)

Seguro Popular – Public Health Services

SEMAR – Secretary of the Navy (*Secretaria de Marina Armada de Mexico*)

SEP – Secretary of Public Education (*Secretaria de Educacion Publica*)

SSA – Secretary of Health (*Secretaria de Salud*)

STERP – Short Term Economic Recovery Programme

TNF – Tripartite Negotiating Forum

UN – United Nations

USAID – United States Agency for International Development

ZANU-PF – Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front

ZBC – Zimbabwe Broadcasting Holdings

ZEC – Zimbabwe Electoral Commission

ZRP – Zimbabwe Republic Police

Glossary of Terms

Accountability – a situation where those with the power to make and enforce rules are answerable to those that live by the rules.

Advocacy – a set of organized, strategic political actions to influence a decision maker and affect an outcome.

Beijing Platform for Action – an agenda for women's empowerment, specifically removing obstacles to women's public participation, that came out of the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing.

Budget cycle – is a four-step process that includes budget formulation, budget approval, budget execution and budget oversight.

Budget monitoring – the observation and examination of the government's budget processes and related documents by citizens and citizen groups in order to understand, raise awareness and influence how public funding is allocated and spent.

Bylaws – rules adopted by an organization to govern its own affairs.

Campaign-related monitoring – the monitoring and recording of information gathered by citizens or civil society organizations in order to analyze and publicize information on party platforms, candidates' follow-through on campaign promises and compliance with pledges signed during the campaign. These types of monitoring activities fall under two categories: pre-election monitoring and post-election monitoring.

Capacity building – assistance that helps individuals or organizations develop skills or competencies to enhance overall performance.

Citizen-based public service delivery evaluation – a method of assessment in which community members rate and critique the quality and availability of government-provided services.

Civil society organizations (CSOs) – a wide array of organizations autonomous from the state and the market. These organizations include non-governmental organizations, citizen-based organizations, labor unions, indigenous groups, charitable organizations, faith-based organizations, professional associations and foundations. For the purposes of NDI programming, media and political parties are not considered CSOs.

Committee on the Rights of the Child – a committee of the United Nations that monitors implementation of United Nations conventions and protocols on children's rights.

Community platform – a set of policy priorities developed by community members and usually presented to candidates and political parties during a campaign period.

Developmental subgrant – financial assistance used to build the capacity and effectiveness of local groups as they pursue their self-defined goals and objectives.

Expenditure tracking – the monitoring of government resource allocations, spending and publicly funded projects by citizens or civil society organizations to see if budgeted funds are spent as intended and are used efficiently and effectively.

Global Youth Coalition on HIV/AIDS – an initiative that seeks to improve HIV and AIDS policies and programming geared toward young people by facilitating the inclusion of skilled young leaders in decisionmaking that affects their lives.

Legislative monitoring – a process through which civil society organizations observe, evaluate and comment on legislators' work and performance – often focusing on the effectiveness and efficiency of legislative processes in meeting citizens' needs.

Legislative scorecard – a tool used by CSOs to provide information on legislators' behavior in the legislature published primarily for the benefit of citizens and other civil society organizations. A legislator's attendance and participation in meetings with constituents are just two points that may be included in a scorecard.

Monitoring government follow-through – initiatives where civil society organizations monitor how well governments implement official decisions – such as the execution of domestic violence policies, power sharing agreements, electoral reform laws and mandates for constitutional reform.

Pan-African Parliament – the legislative body of the African Union. It currently provides oversight and has advisory and consultative powers, but it aims to exercise full, binding legislative powers in the future.

Participatory budgeting – a process of democratic deliberation and decisionmaking through which governments allocate a percentage of a budget, usually at the municipal level, for civil society to budget directly according to community priorities.

Pledge campaign – a program in which CSOs ask candidates and political parties to commit to a set of principles that they promise to uphold or actions they pledge to take if elected.

Political mapping – a technique of outlining and analyzing alliances and/or positions of political actors within a particular policy arena.

Political-process monitoring – a broad range of citizen or CSO-driven initiatives that seek to hold government officials accountable by monitoring and reporting on their actions. The five types of Political-Process Monitoring are budget monitoring, budget advocacy and expenditure tracking; legislative monitoring; shadow reports; monitoring government follow-through; and campaign-related monitoring.

Shadow reporting – a means of monitoring and raising awareness of government compliance with signed international treaties, conventions and declarations by researching and producing a supplement or alternative "shadow report" to the national government's "official" report to the United Nations. A CSO creates an independent report that accounts for how the government is adhering to, or meeting requirements of a treaty, convention or declaration that the government has signed onto and presents it to the United Nations to supplement incomplete information that may have been presented by the government's version.

Social accountability – a process through which citizens work to hold government accountable as a means of ensuring good governance and responsive policymaking.

Space – the avenues and opportunities that exist for citizens to organize, voice their preferences, act individually and collectively, and engage government.

Sunshine budget criteria – metrics for analyzing the transparency of the budget process and the representativeness of the draft and final budgets. They are meant to be used as guidelines for any local budget monitoring initiatives.

Town hall meeting – a gathering between citizens (who are linked by common geography or interest) and public officials in order to discuss issues and provide a forum in which citizens can express their views.

Transparency – the availability of information to the general public and clarity about government rules, procedures and decisions. Open access to government information is a key component of transparency.

UN Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS – UN Special Assembly that took place in June 2001 and was a major milestone in the AIDS response. It was recognized that the AIDS epidemic had caused untold suffering and death worldwide.

Voice – citizens' abilities to express their preferences, aggregate interests, act individually and collectively, and influence public officials and other decisionmakers.

Voter guide – a resource that compiles biographical, policy and/or platform information about the candidates or parties up for election.

Watchdog – an organization that guards against government waste, theft or undesirable practices.

Much of NDI's work is designed to help democratic governments deliver a better quality of life for citizens. The credibility of a democracy depends, to an important degree, on how its institutions work in practice and whether they address issues that improve the circumstances affecting citizens' daily lives in such areas as employment, health, education, public safety, social services, human rights and infrastructure. Deepening democracy so that it can deliver tangible improvements in people's lives has become an overarching NDI objective. The Institute's approach to "helping democracy deliver" often involves partnering with politically marginalized and socially excluded groups to help them build awareness and influence around their own priorities. It also includes fostering substantive, sustained interactions between citizens and public officials.
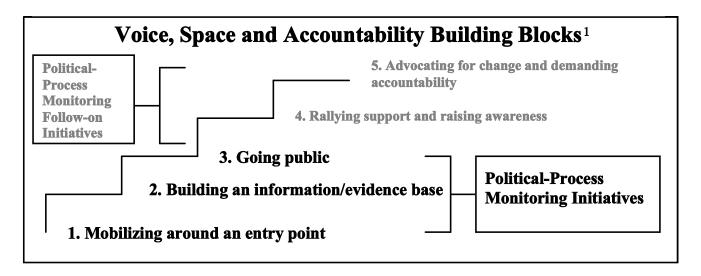
NDI's approach to helping democracy deliver is based upon the understanding that citizen participation is as much a means of helping establish and institutionalize democratic structures and processes, as it is an end result of democracy. The Institute's civic programs have always strived to increase informed and active citizenship, because participation is viewed widely as an intrinsic element of a strong and vibrant democracy. At the same time, however, well-organized, strategic citizen participation can help initiate peaceful political changes, which also makes citizen participation an instrumental element in strengthening and maintaining democracy. This citizen-centered approach for deepening democracy and making it deliver in many different contexts draws upon the instrumental potential of citizens organizing and acting together.

In accordance with the approach, NDI's citizen participation programs deal with deficits in citizen voice, political space and government accountability. Voice refers to citizens' abilities to express their preferences, aggregate interests, act individually and collectively, and influence public officials and other decisionmakers. The notion of space refers to the avenues, opportunities, and freedoms that exist for citizens to organize, voice their preferences, and engage government. Accountability refers to a situation where those with the power to make and enforce rules are answerable to those that live by the rules. This "voice, space and accountability" framework reflects an interrelationship between different dimensions of democratic practice, as well as the idea that participation can deepen all three dimensions.

NDI's "voice, space and accountability" framework is related to the World Bank's "social accountability" framework. According to the World Bank, social accountability is an approach to building accountability that relies on civic engagement beyond voting. It is a broad range of formal and informal actions and mechanisms that citizens, communities, civil society organizations (CSOs) and independent media can use to ensure that public officials and civil servants take responsibility for their actions. These mechanisms are bottom-up, inclusive and demand-driven, which can help ordinary citizens – especially those from traditionally marginalized populations – affect changes in policy development and implementation, as well as budget processes. The result can be improved service delivery and reduced government corruption, as well as public policies and programs that more accurately reflect citizen priorities.

NDI's framework is explicit about citizenship comprising a set of inherently political roles and responsibilities, and recognizes that citizen organizing and action can help change the way politics is practiced. NDI programs, including civic education, voter education, get-out-the-vote, issue organizing and advocacy, and political-process monitoring, are becoming more and more focused on putting citizens at the forefront of making political change happen. From community organizing programs that help reshape power relations, to legislative monitoring programs that help citizens hold public officials accountable for policies and performance, NDI's work recognizes the transformative potential of citizen activism. NDI has also found that, when citizens develop a voice and a degree of influence over government actions, their demand for, and defense of democracy increases.

Political-process monitoring is a broad range of citizen or CSO-driven initiatives that seek to hold government officials accountable by monitoring and reporting on their actions. Political-process monitoring can create avenues through which citizens and governments work together to make democracy deliver. Groups can build off of monitoring efforts by going public with their findings in order to raise awareness of issues and rally support from a variety of stakeholders. Once they have activated a support base, groups can advocate for change and demand greater accountability.

Voice, Space and Accountability Building Blocks[1]

```
Political-
Process
Monitoring
Follow-on
Initiatives
```

5. Advocating for change and demanding accountability

4. Rallying support and raising awareness

3. Going public

2. Building an information/evidence base

Political-Process Monitoring Initiatives

1. Mobilizing around an entry point

NDI's Work on Political-Process Monitoring Initiatives

Since the late 1990s, NDI has helped local civil society partners monitor political processes. As a result, local groups have compiled and analyzed information, developed and disseminated reports and used the monitoring findings to raise public awareness and prompt government responsiveness. To support political-process monitoring, NDI provides local partners with capacity building assistance. The assistance typically includes helping with the development of context-appropriate monitoring methods and tools.

NDI has supported five types of political-process monitoring: legislative monitoring; budget monitoring, budget advocacy and expenditure tracking; shadow reports; monitoring government follow-through; and campaign-related monitoring. Each type of monitoring corresponds to different entry points where local groups can engage in the political process. For example:

- Groups carrying out legislative monitoring initiatives directly observe legislative sessions and committees, interview legislators and use surveys to capture citizen perspectives. This type of monitoring is meant to foster accountability by publicly evaluating legislator performance and determining overall legislative effectiveness in meeting citizen needs.

- When groups aim to hold their local government accountable for budget allocations and expenditures, they generally begin by monitoring budget committee sessions and examining budget documents. The findings

from these activities may be used to identify issues needing greater scrutiny, inform budget advocacy campaigns seeking specific changes in the budget or budget process, track government expenditures and ensure that allocated funds are used efficiently and as intended.

- Shadow reports can be developed by groups – often from traditionally marginalized populations – in order to monitor and raise awareness of government compliance with a signed international treaty, convention or declaration. These groups research and produce reports that identify and analyze the strengths and weaknesses of public policies, programs and services relevant to the international agreement. The reports are then submitted to a multilateral institution in conjunction with the government's "official" report on its compliance with the signed treaty, convention or declaration.

- After a government has made an official decision – such as passing a domestic violence policy, signing a power sharing accord, advancing electoral reforms or initiating a constitutional reform process – civil society can hold governments accountable by monitoring the implementation of these decisions. Usually carried out by a coalition of CSOs to support an on-going advocacy or awareness-raising initiative, monitoring government follow-through involves collecting information via key informant interviews and observations. The resulting product is often a report that the coalition then distributes to the public.

- Taking advantage of the political space created by an election, civil society can conduct campaign-related monitoring by gathering, analyzing and publicizing information on party platforms, candidates' follow-through on campaign promises or compliance with pledges signed during a campaign. These types of monitoring activities allow citizens to establish a set of expectations that can be used to hold public officials accountable for actions before and after an election.

1 Adapted from: Malena, Carmen, Reiner Forster and Janmejay Singh. The World Bank. Social Development Department. *Social Accountability: An Introduction to the Concept and Emerging Practice.* Washington, DC. December 2004. p. 9. http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPCENG/214578-1116499844371/20524122/310420PAPER0Solity0SDP0Civic0no1076.pdf.

Political-process monitoring, in all its forms, is being used with increasing frequency by groups around the world. This type of activism serves an important purpose when it comes to deepening democratic practices, by instilling a culture of participation, oversight and government accountability. When combined with issue-based organizing and advocacy campaigns, political-process monitoring can be an even more powerful accountability tool. In some cases, groups may use more than one type of monitoring initiative. For instance, an organization focused on gender equity may provide policy inputs, monitor how legislation is drafted, track the legislation and budgetary processes and monitor how the policy is implemented and upheld. At the same time, the group will take direct action to influence decisions.

To support groups as they design and implement political-process monitoring initiatives, NDI seeks to establish developmental partnerships. These partnerships are structured to develop a local partner's capacity to carry out monitoring in an effective and sustained manner. The Institute's support for political-process monitoring efforts involve a variety of techniques grounded in the knowledge that partners learn best when provided with consistent support addressing their changing needs, capacities and interests. While NDI may provide financial support – usually in the form of subgrants – attention is primarily focused on providing technical assistance.

To help partners develop the skills necessary for specific political-process monitoring activities, the Institute seeks to provide in-depth, practical guidance – including coaching, giving structured feedback, sharing examples and facilitating regular reflection exercises. When using this "guided practice" methodology within the context of a political-process monitoring program, the Institute focuses its assistance on developing: monitoring strategies and plans, information-gathering tools, data-collection and analysis protocols, communication and outreach tactics, and relationships with public officials, opinions leaders and the media.

Opportunities and Challenges

Opportunities Created by Political-Process Monitoring

A political-process monitoring initiative should always be viewed as a means to an end and not the end in itself. The findings and recommendations that come out of monitoring efforts can almost always open up other opportunities to create change through further action. By publicizing the outcomes of their monitoring projects in the media, groups can raise citizens' awareness of policies, laws and publicly-funded projects – perhaps sparking grassroots organizing efforts or simply creating a more informed electorate. While monitoring can evolve out of advocacy campaigns, the information collected can also be used to support new or ongoing advocacy efforts. Political-process monitoring initiatives can also create opportunities for CSOs to build constructive relationships with both public officials and citizens. These relationships can be further developed through one-on-one meetings and public forums after the monitoring initiative is finished. And of course, one type of political-process monitoring can always lead to another.

Outcomes of Political-Process Monitoring

The following chart of development outcomes represents what can be achieved through its support for different types of political-process monitoring initiatives. The chart organizes the illustrative outcomes along three dimensions: voice, space and accountability. Those outcomes in the 'voice' column address the ability of citizens to aggregate and express their interests in order to engage government. The outcomes in the 'space' column address the avenues and opportunities, or "entry points," that exist for citizens to organize and act. The outcomes in the 'accountability' column address government responsiveness to citizens' inputs and citizen influence over public officials.

DESIRED OUTCOMES			
	Voice	*Space*	*Accountability*
Legislative Monitoring	• Citizens have access to reliable information on the functioning of legislative processes at the national and local government levels • Citizens have access to reliable information on legislators at the national and local government levels	• Direct, constructive interaction between citizens and legislators at the local or national levels • Direct, constructive interaction between citizens and political parties at the national or local branch levels	• Increased government and political party accountability to citizens • Improvement in legislative capacity and individual legislators' performance at the national or local levels
Budget Monitoring/ Budget Advocacy/ Expenditure Tracking	• Increased citizen capacity to hold governments accountable • A citizenry that is more engaged in political processes, especially at the local level	• More transparent local budget processes and expenditure management • Improved communication between civil society, government and citizens	• Decreased levels of corruption • Improved service delivery and public infrastructure projects
Shadow Reporting	• The United Nations (UN), national government and the partner have more accurate and in depth information on government compliance with international treaties, conventions and accords	• Increased collaboration between governments, CSOs and political parties on policy development and implementation	• Increased political party and government accountability and responsiveness • Gaps in government policy development and implementation are identified and addressed
Monitoring Government Follow-Through	• Increased public awareness of the extent to which policies or laws are implemented and enforced • Increased public awareness of the extent to which public officials are in compliance with a government agreement • Improved ability to influence government based on monitoring findings • An enhanced understanding of how government follow-through on decisions can affect democratic governance	• Increased constructive cooperation between governments and CSOs concerning the implementation of government decisions	• Increased compliance with government agreements • Increased implementation and enforcement of public policies and laws
Campaign-Related Monitoring	• An electorate more informed of candidates' backgrounds, campaign platforms and voting records • A public record is kept of campaign promises	• Citizens and elected officials develop constructive relationships	• Citizen priorities are taken into account throughout the campaign season • Elected officials are held accountable for their campaign promises post-election • The policy priorities of both candidates and elected officials more accurately represent citizen interests

Opportunities for Political-Process Monitoring

Monitoring government actions can be a powerful strategy for holding governments accountable. Although not always the most appropriate method of engaging government, NDI has found that certain circumstances create particularly good opportunities for this type of programming, as a means of activating citizens and helping democracy deliver.

- *When laws or policies are passed that enable citizens to access government information and processes*
Sunshine laws demand that government decisionmaking processes, as well as the decisions made, are accessible to citizens. Public meeting laws require that governments give citizens advance notice of government meetings, that the agenda is made public ahead of time and that the meeting minutes are made public afterward. Freedom of Information Acts (FOIAs) provide citizens with the right to request access to records reflective of governmental decisions and policies. These types of laws open up the necessary political space for citizens and CSOs to effectively monitor political processes. The passage of such laws and policies would create a particularly good opportunity for legislative and budget monitoring.

- *Periods of political transition*
Periods of political transition offer opportunities for CSOs to become involved in forming new constitutions and restructuring government systems and structures. When transitioning to a more democratic system, governments are sometimes more willing to include civil society in planning committees or working groups, thus better positioning them to monitor policy development and implementation.

- *When a government signs onto an international agreement*
When a government signs onto an international agreement, it is making a very public statement that it will pursue a specific set of objectives. Signing such an agreement makes the government accountable to a multilateral institution for complying with the terms set out in the agreement. This provides an opportunity for CSOs to develop shadow reports.

- *When a government is trying to gain entry into an intergovernmental organization (i.e., the European Union, African Union or the United Nations)*
In order to gain membership into intergovernmental organizations, such as the European Union, governments must meet a set of criteria that often include the protection of political freedoms and a greater voice for citizens. This provides CSOs with increased political space to engage in any of the five types of political-process monitoring initiatives.

- *When foreign donors require government transparency in spending funds*
When awarding funding to host country governments, foreign donors often require that the government officials report on how they are spending those funds. This provides CSOs with an opportunity to monitor budgets and track expenditures, even if their country has not adopted any sunshine laws or freedom of information measures.

- *When a CSO's advocacy campaign has successfully led to the passage of a law or policy*
When a CSO's advocacy campaign has successfully led to the passage of a law or policy, that organization is uniquely situated to then monitor the extent to which it is implemented. During the advocacy process, the CSO might have developed a certain level of expertise in the issue area, created relationships with decision-makers and mobilized a grassroots base. All of those resources could be used to engage in policy implementation monitoring, budget monitoring or expenditure tracking.

- *When elections are held*
Because elections are mechanisms for holding government officials accountable and are arguably the most visible manifestations of democracy, they can present opportunities for citizens to engage in political processes beyond voting. Citizens can create records of candidates' platforms and positions on citizen priority issues in the period leading up to an election, then track changes over time or use the records to hold newly-elected officials accountable post-election.

Developmental and Political Challenges

Even when opportunities exist to carry out political-process monitoring initiatives, both NDI and its partners need to be aware of the developmental and political challenges associated with this type of programming. When deciding whether to engage in monitoring or support monitoring efforts, the political space first needs to be analyzed. Then attention should be turned toward the monitoring group. What capacities does it already have and what capacities will it need to develop in order to successfully design and implement political-process monitoring initiatives? What kinds of power dynamics are there between the monitoring group and the government? How is the group situated within the local civil society community and the international arena? How do citizens perceive the organization? Keeping all of these issues in mind, the level of risk involved with carrying out monitoring initiatives also needs to be determined and taken into account before moving forward.

The openness of political space within a country is a key factor in determining the successfulness of monitoring. In order to implement a political-process monitoring initiative, groups need to have a certain amount of access to information. Monitoring is challenging, and in some cases impossible, if groups are unable to access public documents or observe legislative or budgetary meetings and commit-

tees. If the media is restricted and citizens are afraid to participate in surveys or interviews, then even data collection that does not directly involve the government would be difficult. Limited political space would also limit the extent to which groups are able to raise awareness of their findings and use those findings to create concrete changes. In a restricted political space, it could be dangerous to publicize documents that are critical of the government.

In some cases, there may be political will within the government to increase citizen participation in decisionmaking processes, but there may be institutional limitations. The government may not have the capacity to meet the needs of groups conducting political-process monitoring. For instance, government officials may be unaware of public access to information laws or local government agencies may not have the systems in place to provide information to the public. The capacity of government institutions should be thoroughly examined before conducting any monitoring initiatives, otherwise groups may become frustrated when they are not able to gain full access to the information they need. Monitoring groups should also be aware of the government's ability to absorb monitoring findings and recommendations. Institutional problems, such as internal organizational issues or party politics, may limit the ability of government bodies to implement CSO recommendations. In such cases, both citizens and local government are likely to become frustrated and see political-process monitoring activities as ineffective. Being aware of these potential institutional limitations is important as groups develop strategies and identify appropriate monitoring methods in an effort to achieve their larger organizational goals.

Other important factors to take into consideration when supporting or implementing a political-process monitoring initiative are the power dynamics amongst the initiative's stakeholders. Challenges may arise if the monitoring group does not gain the respect of government officials or if citizens do not feel that the group represents their interests. If other local CSOs or if international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) do not regard the group as legitimate or trustworthy, then they will not support monitoring activities and findings will not be as influential. Monitoring groups should understand the power dynamics of the political space in which they are working, and create positive relationships with stakeholders in order to gain their buy-in to the monitoring initiative.

Any group interested in monitoring should already have, or possess the potential for developing, a certain level of political power. This power can stem from the group's connections with public officials, its ability to mobilize large numbers of people at the grassroots level or even from a reputation as a highly respected organization. A group's ability use its collective power is important so that it can more easily access information through both formal and informal channels; its

findings will be taken seriously; and it can withstand pushback from the government.

Before beginning a monitoring initiative, citizens must also fully understand and accept the risks involved. Even in its most non-confrontational form, monitoring political processes requires that CSOs and citizens be critical of the government. Probably the greatest challenge of conducting these types of initiatives is ensuring that groups not only have an adequate amount of political space to implement monitoring initiatives, but that they are able to do so safely. In certain circumstances or environments, groups must develop enough "power" to prevent or withstand negative consequences stemming from monitoring initiatives – such as reduced government funding for its programs, threats, intimidation and smear campaigns. Bringing public officials into the process from the beginning and presenting findings so that both the government's successes and shortcomings are highlighted are two ways to reduce risks.

Political-Process Monitoring and NDI's Approach to Partnerships

For more than two decades, NDI has conducted programs to help activate and empower citizens, establish strong civic cultures and achieve an appropriate balance of power between citizens and government. The Institute's approach to increasing citizen participation has generally involved partnering with local CSOs to help them develop the capabilities needed to undertake organized political actions - such as political-process monitoring initiatives.

The success of NDI's citizen participation programs, in large part, depends on how well partnerships are structured and nurtured over time. When supporting local civic groups, NDI strives to construct "intimate" developmental partnerships. This means that NDI clarifies roles, responsibilities and expectations with partners; responds to partners' needs and concerns; uses a mix of assistance methods that emphasize helping partners learn from their own experiences and from the experiences of their counterparts in other countries; allows the partners to take ownership of decisions; and champions partners to other institutions. This reflects NDI's preferred partnership dynamic and helps to ensure that the Institute's assistance is welcomed, appropriate and applied.

NDI has found that political-process monitoring programs are more effective when close attention is paid to the way in which partnerships are structured. Both the Institute and its partner should have a clear understanding of the partnership's purpose, as well as each organization's roles, responsibilities and mutual expectations. In order to ensure that this happens, NDI's approach to partnerships should be systematically incorporated into each of its political-process monitoring programs.

The Institute often uses a mechanism for structuring partnerships called a memorandum of understanding (MoU) because it ensures both clarity and mutual accountability. MoUs are developed at the start of a partnership in order to clarify and confirm the roles, responsibilities and expectations of NDI and its partner(s). An MoU for a political-process monitoring program should express the following:

- A partner group's desire to engage in political-process monitoring and organizational development targeted to specific areas (i.e., planning, communications, research and management);

- A partner group's desire to receive outside assistance in strengthening its organizational development and carrying out political-process monitoring initiatives; and

- The level and type of support NDI will provide the group during a specified period.

As the focus then turns toward maintaining good working relations, the MoU becomes the roadmap for assistance, an accountability and conflict management tool and a performance assessment instrument.

The Do's of Developmental Partnership

- *Change the nature of assistance to reflect the partner's needs as it matures.* If steady progress is not being made by the group, reassess whether assistance is appropriate and if the organization is really committed to improvement and sustainability.

- *As the partnership progresses, remain clear and consistent about your role as an assistance provider.*

- *Allow the partner to make mistakes.* This will help the local partner improve its judgment and learn first-hand what works and what does not. It will also spark reflection.

- *Provide comparative information and feedback.* This will help the partner make informed decisions about what is in its best interests.

- *Keep assistance practical and purposeful.* The partner should have appropriate expectations about what NDI will provide and when it will be provided. Assistance should be directly related to the real and recognized needs of the partner.

- *Encourage the partner to engage in longer-term strategic thinking in order to help it become self-sustaining.*

The Don'ts of Developmental Partnership

- *Do not make decisions for the partner and do not work for it.* The partner needs to learn by doing and if it is reluctant to do the work, then reconsider the relationship.

- *Do not share an office with the partner.* This can make it too difficult to draw a line between your work and that of the group.

- *Do not give directives or treat the partner as a contract worker.* This will create a culture of dependency.

- *Do not assume that the partner understands your role as an assistance provider.* Develop an MoU to define roles and responsibilities.

Political-Process Monitoring Recommendations

NDI developed the following recommendations based upon a desk review of NDI program documents and interviews with NDI staff members, partners and program beneficiaries. They are specifically designed to provide guidance for NDI staff supporting a partner's political-process monitoring initiative, as well as groups carrying out political-process monitoring activities.

Recommendations for Program Implementers

- Partners need to understand that monitoring should be a means for change and not viewed as an end in itself.

- Citizens are more likely to remain engaged and encourage others to become involved if they are able to see nearly immediate, direct benefits from their work. Before engaging in political-process monitoring activities, ensure that the political space exists to affect at least some amount of concrete change.

- When working with partners, whether they are coalitions or single organizations, use a formal mechanism – such as an MoU or subaward – to establish the roles, responsibilities and expectations of the partner, NDI and any other organization providing assistance. This helps ensure clarity and mutual accountability when structuring and maintaining a partnership.

- When working with a newly-formed coalition or organization, it should immediately identify its mission, vision and goals.

- The group should also immediately establish a concrete organizational structure for both decisionmaking purposes and to manage the expectations.

- Assist partners with developing and following a clear, concrete monitoring strategy based on clearly defined objectives. Partners carry out program activities more effectively and efficiently when their actions are informed by a strategy.

- Assistance to a coalition should include consensus-building and conflict mitigation, especially in contexts where there is not a history of CSOs working together.

- Adapt programming to the evolving capacities, needs and interests of the local participants instead of relying solely on program models.

- The senior staff of local partner organizations should be brought into any monitoring initiative from the beginning to ensure institutional buy-in and support.

- Message development, communications and media trainings should be a part of an assistance package.

- Creating a network of citizen groups can be important for creating a more powerful voice at the national level, but there is a need to foster communication among citizen groups in order to do this.

- Partners should act transparently and involve as many stakeholders in the monitoring process as possible.

- In order to ensure that the data collected through monitoring has resonance with as many stakeholders as possible, the findings need to easily accessible and well-publicized.

Recommendations for Monitoring Groups

Legislative Monitoring

- Involve legislators from the beginning of the legislative monitoring project so that they understand the project and do not feel threatened by monitors. This will make it more likely that legislators will give their support and cooperate more fully during project activities.

- When seeking legislators' buy-in to monitoring initiatives, provide them with an incentive for participation, such as recognition for good governance.

- Ensure that citizens have physical access to legislative sessions and committees. Legislative monitoring is most successful when formal and informal mechanisms create enough political space for citizens to collect the necessary information.

Budget Monitoring/Budget Advocacy/Expenditure Tracking

- Implement budget monitoring, budget advocacy and expenditure tracking initiatives through longer-term projects of at least 18 months. Successful budget monitoring initiatives are planned around the budget cycle and fiscal year of the host government. A longer timeframe allows for citizen or CSO engagement throughout the entire budget cycle.

Shadow Reports

- Establish a coalition of CSOs to develop the shadow report. It is too large a task for one organization to tackle on its own.

- There should be at least one person hired, either externally or internally, to work full-time on the shadow report. This person should have connections with CSOs and government officials at the local and international levels, as well as expertise in human rights, shadow reporting and the issues addressed by the report.

- The coalition should seek out external funding so that it can hire the necessary full-time staff.

- While establishing the coalition, ensure that the CSOs are interested in developing a shadow report and willing to work together with other organizations to do so.

- While establishing the coalition, consider how the local government and other local and international CSOs view the potential coalition members.

- Before beginning work on the shadow report, the coalition should map the context in which they are working – specifically what other organizations are doing in their issue area and if other organizations are developing shadow reports.

Monitoring Government Follow-Through

- Because policies are often complex and cover a variety of issue areas, groups should be realistic about the scope of their initiatives to monitor government follow-through. If they are not able to monitor the implementation of the government decision in its entirety, then the group should choose specific aspects on which to focus.

Campaign-Related Monitoring

- Because the election period is limited, there is generally not a lot of time for in-depth discussions on a wide range of issues. Citizens and CSOs need to systematically prioritize the issues that they want candidates to address.

- Identify reformers within political parties and involve them to the extent possible in campaign-related monitoring initiatives.

Assistance to Monitoring Groups

The Monitoring Preparation Stage

During this stage, NDI first helps groups determine their existing level of capacity and the types of capacity that would need to be developed to monitor. This is best done by conducting a baseline capacity assessment of the partner organization, or organizations if working with a coalition. When doing a capacity assessment, the Institute uses questionnaires, focus groups or interviews to collect information that can include:

- knowledge of the political process;

- knowledge and experience developing, managing and evaluating political-process monitoring initiatives;

- internal governance systems, decisionmaking structures, lines of authority and management practices;

- financial management policies; and

- relationships with the government, civil society, the international community, the media and citizens.

Once the partner group or coalition's capacity is known, NDI uses that information to provide customized assistance targeting specific capacity needs. The Institute uses a mix of assistance methods, including coaching, consultation, training and facilitation. Taken together, NDI describes its approach as "guided practice," with an emphasis on "action" learning. As a result, partners should become better able to:

- clearly define its vision and goals;

- strategically plan program activities;

- develop sound ethical and accountability practices – including establishing codes of conduct or organizational policies as necessary;

- develop appropriate internal and external communication strategies – including media relations, message development and information dissemination techniques;

- determine human resource needs – including volunteer recruitment and management;

- apply sound financial management practices; and

- build and maintain relationships with political leaders and public officials.

When working with partners to develop a strategy for their political-process monitoring initiatives, NDI helps them determine the purpose of the monitoring, the timeframe, appropriate methods, necessary tools and desired results. The Institute has also facilitated consultations with local experts and other CSOs to help the partner identify the most appropriate monitoring strategy and methods. If a partner has an adequate amount of capacity for developing strategy, NDI's role shifts to that of a consultant and facilitator.

The focus and intensity of the assistance is determined by the findings of the capacity assessment, the partner's ability to absorb assistance, the timeframe and NDI's level of resources. When working with a strong, established organization – such as NDI's Jordanian partner, Al Quds Center for Political Studies – the Institute has played a more consultative role when helping the group strategize and plan activities. However, when working with a newly-formed coalition – such as NDI's Mexican partner, the Mexican Coalition for the Rights of Disabled Persons (*Coalición México por los Derechos de las Personas con Discapacidad,* **COA-MEX**) – NDI has provided a more significant amount of training and guidance to help the group clarify its purpose, lines of authority and decisionmaking procedures, conflict mitigation processes and a division of labor.

Depending on the capacities of a partner, NDI may either work with a group to develop monitoring tools or help them adapt preexisting tools. In Albania, the citizen groups did not have any prior experience with the budgetary process and very little capacity to develop their own tools, so the Institute provided a set of monitoring tools and trained the groups on how to modify and use them. However, NDI provided limited guidance to the Forum for Popular Participation (FPPM), its partner in Indonesia, as it produced two manuals on pro-poor budget analysis, budget monitoring and budget advocacy.

In most cases, NDI's partners have had little to no experience with monitoring when they begin their political-process monitoring initiatives. Therefore, once the Institute has assisted them with developing a strategy and tools, training is still necessary to implement the strategy and apply those tools. The trainings have addressed data collection techniques, data analysis and report writing. Specific topics are dependent upon the type of political-process monitoring that the group is carrying out.

The Data Collection Stage

NDI's assistance during data collection is focused on helping groups develop and deepen their capacities to organize information and analyze results. It is also geared toward assisting groups in developing relationships with political institutions and actors, the media and other civic organiza-

tions. To do this, NDI has worked with public officials at the national and local levels to help them better understand the benefits of making political process more transparent and including citizens and CSOs in decision-making. These measures can help enhance service delivery and policies, reduce corruption and garner greater grassroots support from constituencies. NDI's assistance to monitoring groups has included:

- organizing workshops and providing continuous feedback to strengthen the groups' ability to apply standard data collection techniques and strategies;

- helping the groups develop and use data entry systems;

- providing technical and political guidance during data analysis;

- facilitating internal discussions on the timeline for developing monitoring reports, the appropriate structure of the reports and the division of labor;

- organizing and moderating public forums between monitoring groups, local experts, other CSOs, public officials and citizens;

- organizing one-on-one meetings between monitoring group representatives and individual public officials (i.e., local- and national-level representatives, political party leaders and election candidates); and

- providing financial assistance in the form of a subgrant.

Resulting Products and Initiatives

As partners use the monitoring findings to develop products and support follow-on initiatives, NDI's assistance has helped groups enhance the quality of reporting, publicize findings and determine post-monitoring strategies. During the report-writing process, the Institute's role generally becomes more consultative, providing feedback and guidance as the groups draft documents. However, shadow reports, for example, require groups to use technical language and very specific formats. In these circumstances, NDI has brought in international experts to train or provide more intensive assistance for coalitions engaged in this type of monitoring.

To help its partners publicize their findings, NDI has relied on a variety of techniques. The Institute has used its ability to convene diverse groups to organize meetings and roundtables so that the monitoring group can discuss its findings with legislators, other CSOs and citizens. The Institute has also publicized the work of monitoring groups by emailing electronic copies of reports to its network of partners and disseminating printed copies during events connected to its other projects. In some cases, NDI has provided guidance and technical assistance to help monitoring groups launch and maintain their own websites. To assist groups in preparing for dealings with the press, the Institute has provided trainings and consultations on implementing communication strategies, message development, public speaking and managing media relations.

NDI helps to ensure that partners continue to view their monitoring initiatives as part of their larger strategy, and not just as stand alone projects, by working with them on post-monitoring strategies. This involves providing consultations and facilitating internal meetings to determine how to use findings to support follow-on initiatives. These initiatives could include evidence-based advocacy, awareness-raising campaigns or additional political-process monitoring initiatives.