



USAID Final Report

RUSSIA: Democratic Institutions Strengthening

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I. SUMMARY

In May 2001, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) entered into a four-year associate cooperative agreement with USAID for work in the Russian Federation. All activities correspond to USAID's Strategic Objective 2.1: "Increased, better informed citizen participation in political and economic decision-making," Intermediate Results 2.1.1.2: "National and regional political parties' infrastructures developed," and 2.1.3.1: "More effective NGO advocacy of people's needs."

NDI had been active in Russia since 1991, and had conducted active political party building and civic organizing activities since 1993. NDI's primary political party partners were the Union of Right Forces (SPS) and Yabloko. Its primary civic partner was the Golos Association for the Defense of Voters' Rights.

NDI's programs were designed to help parties, civic groups, and legislative bodies reach out to citizens and civic organizations, involving them in the political process, and mobilizing citizen action in favor of democratic reform. In the political party sphere, NDI conducted programs aimed at supporting regional party development, especially in Ekaterinburg and Saratov and surrounding regions and on developing Yabloko's and SPS's internal training capacities in advance of the 2003 State Duma elections. In the civic arena, NDI worked most closely with Golos on preparing for and monitoring the 2003 and 2004 elections, and then on expanding its organization in anticipation of another round of nationwide elections in 2007 and 2008.

The political environment steadily deteriorated over the course of the agreement, becoming increasingly inhospitable to independent civic or political activism. At the beginning of the agreement period, the administration of President Vladimir Putin was pursuing an aggressive agenda aimed at strengthening and centralizing the Russian state, with new limitations on democratic processes and political freedom. There were serious setbacks to Russia's civil society institutions in the first year of Putin's presidency, including a March 2000 presidential election marred by media manipulation and state

interference, new restrictions on civil society organizations, and harassment of journalists expressing critical views.

During Putin's first term, the Kremlin took successive measures to eliminate remaining pockets of autonomy. By the end of 2002, three new laws had been passed that created hurdles for non-Kremlin-aligned parties, as well as civic organizations wanting to participate in elections. A law on political parties placed new restrictions on the role and structure of parties, limited the number of groups eligible to compete in elections, and generally gave the government authority over many aspects of party development that had previously been left to the electorate to determine. A new electoral law and a law on voters' rights also closed space for democratic initiatives. Since 2001, all major broadcast media outlets fell under state control. The President stripped governors of power, by removing them from the parliament's upper house, assigning "super-governors" to oversee them, and then deciding to appoint them rather than allow them to be popularly elected.

During the December 2003 Duma elections, the Kremlin used the vast resources at its disposal to support the "party of power," Unity, which gained a constitutional two-thirds majority. Yabloko and SPS, the only viable reform-oriented parties competing, did not pass the threshold for party list representation. The OSCE and the Council of Europe contended that the Duma elections demonstrated a regression in electoral procedures. The presidential election in March 2004 was also deliberately stage-managed, starting well before election day. Voting and vote tabulation procedures on election day itself were at best questionable, and at worst, irregular.

Golos came under increasing scrutiny of the security services. The Kremlin directly pressured the director and board members to cease monitoring activities. Local security forces questioned regional coordinators, placing some under investigation. A spurious criminal investigation involving NDI, and requiring extensive review of NDI's financial and programmatic records, was launched against a former NDI employee. NDI viewed these incidents as separate aspects of the same pattern of harassment designed to mute criticism of the regime.

As 2004 came to a close, the Kremlin successfully eliminated elections for regional governors, consolidated its control over the judiciary by putting high court appointments under Kremlin control, increased the legal hurdles faced by non-Kremlin-aligned political parties, and limited the rights of citizens to hold demonstrations. These measures centralized political authority within the Kremlin to levels unseen since the demise of the Soviet Union.

As a result of NDI's programs, Golos expanded from five to 23 regional branches and undertook impressive election monitoring campaigns in 2003 and 2004. It is now poised to make a significant contribution to safeguarding the 2007 and 2008 elections. NDI's support to political parties yielded fewer tangible results given the increasingly closed political system. However, thousands of democratic political activists throughout Russia

are now equipped with advanced political organizing skills and can be quickly and effectively mobilized when the appropriate circumstances arise.

II. BACKGROUND

A. Political Context

At the beginning of the agreement period, the administration of President Vladimir Putin was pursuing an aggressive agenda aimed at strengthening and centralizing the Russian state, with new limitations on democratic processes and political freedom. There were serious setbacks to Russia's civil society institutions in the first year of Putin's presidency, including a March 2000 presidential election marred by media manipulation and state interference, new restrictions on civil society organizations, and harassment of journalists expressing critical views. Nevertheless, the political party landscape showed some promise for the development of the two significant democratically oriented parties at the time, Yabloko and the Union of Right Forces (SPS).

Yabloko had grown into a national organization, with chapters in most of Russia's regions, thousands of members, significant national campaign experience, and a prominent national profile. At the same time, party leaders had focused disproportionate attention on Moscow and lacked a commitment to building a grassroots network capable of exerting real political leverage in local, regional and national politics. The party suffered a disappointing outcome in 1999 legislative elections, gaining only 5.9 percent of the party list vote and four seats in single-mandate voting.

Although Democratic Choice of Russia (DCR), SPS's predecessor organization, had suffered through a serious crisis in the mid-1990s, DCR nonetheless bequeathed a strong regional activist network to SPS. It had made strides in professionalizing the operations of its Moscow headquarters and regional offices. These advantages, along with successful coalition-building efforts, had allowed the group to reestablish itself as a movement of national significance in the 1999 elections. SPS achieved relatively encouraging results in the December 1999 elections: 8.5 percent of the party list vote and an additional five single-mandate seats. Yabloko and SPS had made tentative overtures toward cooperating in the Duma to promote their shared interests.

The challenge for democratic parties in 2001 was to protect their modest gains and expand their organizations. They needed to build organizations with strong grassroots networks capable of mobilizing public support for democratic reform. Parties had made cursory efforts in this direction, but they had concentrated far more on campaigning for national offices and building up Moscow headquarters. Parties needed to refocus their efforts to the regional and local levels by, for example, gaining representation in local and regional elected bodies. Democratic parties also needed to work more cooperatively among themselves, in order to provide a counterweight to the authoritarian tendencies of larger political organizations. They faced Duma and presidential elections in 2003 and 2004.

Russia's civil society was vibrant, but also fragmented and weak in 2001. Putin's first year had presented some setbacks. The government had instituted new measures requiring nonprofit organizations to renew their registrations, and many organizations feared they faced refusal and liquidation as a result. In addition, civic organizations confronted two common obstacles: restricted access to decision making and limited responsiveness of government authorities to public concerns. They also operated in isolation, without regular contact with one another or local officials.

Having identified a gap in the civil society spectrum, six prominent advocacy groups joined together in late 1999, with NDI support, to establish a new nonpartisan coalition committed to democratic elections. Golos (the Voice Association for the Defense of Voters' Rights), was formed by the Socio-Ecological Union, the Moscow Helsinki Group, the Women's Information Network, the Association of Young Lawyers, New Perspectives, and the NIS-US Women's Consortium. By 2001, Golos was beginning to emerge as a coherent organization complementary to but distinct from its founders. It had established local branches in five cities: Ekaterinburg, Astrakhan, Yaroslavl, Chelyabinsk and Vladivostok. The local chapters were conducting local election monitoring and voter education projects. Still, Golos was in the early stages of its development. It was small. It had not yet developed clear operating procedures, and its board did not fully reflect the diversity of the coalition's members. Golos aimed to organize a nationwide election monitoring project around the 2003 parliamentary elections and the 2004 presidential election.

The political environment only deteriorated over the course of this agreement, becoming increasingly inhospitable to independent civic or political activism as the Kremlin took successive measures to eliminate remaining pockets of autonomy. By the end of 2002, three new laws had been passed that created hurdles for non-Kremlin-aligned parties, as well as civic organizations wanting to participate in elections. A law on political parties placed new restrictions on the role and structure of parties, limited the number of groups eligible to compete in elections, and generally gave the government authority over many aspects of party development that had previously been left to the electorate to determine. A new electoral law and a law on voters' rights also closed space for democratic initiatives. Since 2001, all major broadcast media outlets fell under state control. The President stripped governors of power, by removing them from the parliament's upper house, assigning "super-governors" to oversee them, and then deciding to appoint them rather than allow them to be popularly elected.

During this period, public support for democratic reforms began to soften. Voter apathy and disillusionment with the process set in. Many formerly active individuals opted out of politics in favor of occupations less apt to draw unwanted attention. Some democratic groups shied away from controversy as a survival tactic. For example, Yabloko chose at times before the 2003 election to distance itself from Western partners such as NDI, for fear that international associations would be used against the party. These retreats further weakened the momentum in favor of democratic reforms and further emboldened authoritarian forces.

The pro-Kremlin Unity party controlled nearly 30 percent of the State Duma in 2001, already giving the Kremlin the ability to initiate nearly all meaningful legislation and see it passed with ease. Following the December 2003 Duma elections, in which the Kremlin used every resource at its disposal to support the “party of power,” Unity gained a constitutional two-thirds majority. Yabloko and SPS, the only viable reform-oriented parties competing, did not pass the threshold for party list representation. The OSCE and the Council of Europe contended that the Duma elections demonstrated a regression in electoral procedures.

The presidential election in March 2004 was also deliberately stage-managed, starting well before election day. Voting and vote tabulation procedures on election day itself were at best questionable, and at worst, irregular. All possible avenues appear to have been used to ensure a large margin of victory for President Vladimir Putin and an acceptable voter turnout percentage. Competition and especially opposition were eliminated.

Golos came under increasing scrutiny of the security services. The Kremlin directly pressured the director and board members to cease monitoring activities. Local security forces questioned regional coordinators, placing some under investigation. A spurious criminal investigation involving NDI, and requiring extensive review of NDI’s financial and programmatic records, was launched against a former NDI employee. NDI viewed these incidents as separate aspects of the same pattern of harassment designed to mute criticism of the regime.

As 2004 came to a close, the Kremlin successfully eliminated elections for regional governors, consolidated its control over the judiciary by putting high court appointments under Kremlin control, increased the legal hurdles faced by non-Kremlin-aligned political parties, and limited the rights of citizens to hold demonstrations. These measures centralized political authority within the Kremlin to levels unseen since the demise of the Soviet Union.

B. NDI in Russia

Since late 1993, when President Boris Yeltsin dissolved the Supreme Soviet, NDI had provided assistance to democratically oriented parties on developing policy agendas and strengthening their organizations so they could serve as credible political choices for voters. Having initially conducted multipartisan seminars, the Institute gradually shifted its programs to training for a number of selected individual parties. NDI’s criteria for selecting party partners included a demonstrated commitment to democratic principles, command of significant public support, potential for growth and interest in working with NDI. In the second half of the 1990s, NDI had worked most closely with three democratic parties that appeared to have the most potential for growth – Yabloko, Democratic Choice of Russia (DCR) and Our Home Is Russia (NDR) – while maintaining contact with a wide range of other reform-minded political groups. After

NDR disbanded, NDI's closest partnerships were with Yabloko and the Union of Right Forces (SPS), the successor party to DCR.

Through NDI assistance, Yabloko had taken steps toward building a stronger and more grassroots base. For example, the party developed a mailing list and newsletter to maintain contact with regional affiliates and members. It had also established a school for political education, which provided outstanding regional organizers with theoretical and practical instruction. Several alumni of this program had been promoted to higher positions of leadership in regional Yabloko organizations. NDI had also contributed to strengthening the organizational outreach capacities of regional party branches in St. Petersburg, Astrakhan, Saratov, Ekaterinburg, Chelyabinsk, and other regions.

NDI had worked with SPS in each of its incarnations since the breakup of the Soviet Union, from the Democratic Russia movement, to the Russia's Choice Party, Democratic Choice of Russia, DCR-United Democrats, Just Cause, and finally SPS. The Institute's assistance had focused particularly on promoting coalition-building, helping SPS set goals and work toward them, and improving campaigning skills.

Initially, NDI's civic programs in Russia focused on encouraging citizens to participate in elections. In 1994, the Institute began conducting large-scale seminars on the fundamentals of civic organizing in selected cities where civic groups showed strong potential for development. NDI also began conducting programs focused specifically on issue advocacy. Recognizing the need for an organization more broadly committed to promoting democratic procedures, NDI helped launch Golos in 1999. Each of the member organizations continued to function as independent national institutions, while uniting within the framework of Golos to pursue issues important to all of them. Golos aimed to protect voters' interests through election monitoring, public education on the rights and responsibilities of voters, and advocacy projects to promote transparency and accountability in government.

In this context, NDI outlined programs for 2001-2005 that were designed to help parties, civic groups, and legislative bodies reach out to citizens and civic organizations, involving them in the political process, and mobilizing citizen action in favor of democratic reform.

NDI's objectives for political party building programs were to:

- Strengthen regional representation and citizen contact.
- Improve contacts with NGOs.
- Enhance coalition-building and other cooperation with like-minded parties.
- Increase cooperation with elected officials.

NDI's objectives in the sphere of civic organizing were to:

- Help Golos develop into a permanent, self-sustaining, national organization with a defined structure and operating procedures.

- Strengthen Golos's skills in organizing election monitoring, voter education, and issue advocacy programs.
- Strengthen the strategic planning capabilities of NGOs other than Golos.

At several intervals in the course of this agreement, NDI received supplemental funding from the National Endowment for Democracy. These grants generally supported enhanced regional programming.

III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

A. Political Party Development

In early 2002, NDI opened regional offices in Ekaterinburg and Saratov. These small offices were staffed by Russian professionals in close contact with NDI/Moscow. They served as bases for expanded and intensified training of local political parties and NGOs in these two politically important regions, including the Sverdlovsk, Chelyabinsk, Samara and Astrakhan oblasts. This USAID agreement supported the overhead for these regional offices, while supplemental funding from the NED helped support the activities they generated.

In the lead-up to the 2003 Duma elections, NDI conducted 25 political training seminars throughout the Sverdlovsk, Cheliabinsk, Samara and Saratov oblasts. The seminars focused on organizing for the coming elections. Given the weakness of the national party leadership, the seminars focused on methods that could be used to maintain regional branches as independent entities, if necessary. Seminars were designed to enable participants to better understand not only political activism, but also civic advocacy. The topics discussed included effective identification of important issues, general outreach to the public and the media, volunteer and membership recruitment, strategic issue-oriented campaign planning, and message development. Following the Duma elections, as NDI had projected, most of the Institute's regional partners were functioning independently of their national leadership. Some formed coalitions among themselves.

Although NDI conducted a significant number of political training seminars, the bulk of the Institute's work in the regions consisted of individual consultations on strategic issues. NDI consulted regularly (often on a weekly basis) with leaders of Yabloko Sverdlovsk, Yabloko Cheliabinsk, Yabloko Samara, Yabloko Astrakhan, SPS Tyumen, SPS Magnitogorsk, SPS Saratov, and the Social Democratic Party of Russia (SDPR) Serov. The consultations followed-up on previous training seminars, and were designed to help these individuals effectively implement learned skills. Of particular note was NDI's work with Yuri Kuznetsov of Yabloko Sverdlovsk, Alekander Kuznetsov of Yabloko Zlatoust, Vadim Bondar of SPS Tyumen, Vladimir Skripka of SPS Cheliabinsk, and Vladimir Yuzhakov of SPS Saratov, as described below.

Yabloko Cheliabinsk

NDI worked extensively with Yabloko Cheliabinsk, focusing on the areas of Cheliabinsk City and Zlatoust. The Institute's work centered on building and expanding a strong organization that focuses its message, has well-trained staff and conducts regular grassroots outreach. Encouragingly, Yabloko expanded its Cheliabinsk oblast regional branch from one to nine chapters.

For the State Duma election, NDI provided consultations to the Zlatoust chapter of Yabloko, which was supporting the candidacy of Alexander Kuznetsov. The consultations focused on door-to-door canvassing. Kuznetsov used these skills in making contact with voters in his district based on carefully identified local issues, and benefited from being a public personality in the region. In the end, his district marginally outpaced Yabloko's result overall in the oblast (5.91 percent in Zlatoust compared to 5.45 percent overall in Cheliabinsk), and he garnered 18.13 percent of the vote in his single-mandate race to place second.

NDI was also encouraged by the results earned by Yabloko in the City of Cheliabinsk, District #183. The branch embraced NDI's advice, and saw a steady increase in membership. In the State Duma election, the district earned 7.94 percent of the vote.

SPS Cheliabinsk

NDI assisted SPS Cheliabinsk with expanding its party branches in two areas – the city of Cheliabinsk and Magnitogorsk.

Following NDI's advice to address issues of importance to the community, SPS focused on topics related to labor and production at the Magnitogorsk Steel Works. The branch placed Steel Works labor union leader Vladimir Skripka in the second spot on the regional SPS party list. SPS received the union's endorsement and endorsements from organizations representing small- and medium-sized businesses. Not long after, however, regional authorities forced the union to rescind its endorsement and support United Russia by harassing union members, including Skripka, who was fired from his job. In the end, SPS was credited with only 3.13 percent of the vote in Magnitogorsk.

SPS Tyumen

NDI provided assistance to SPS's chapter in Tyumen on basic party-building, outreach, structural organization and issue-oriented advocacy. In advance of the State Duma elections, NDI was asked to more closely assist the team supporting single-mandate candidate and incumbent State Duma Deputy Vadim Bondar on outreach, message targeting and canvassing.

When he began the race, Bondar had poll ratings 10 points behind the United Russia candidate, Gennady Raikov. By mid-November, their support was nearly equal. Bondar then suddenly was removed from the race by the Regional Election Commission, based on spurious charges. The REC then disqualified the Communist candidate, leaving only the United Russia candidate on the ballot.

SPS Saratov

The parliamentary election in Saratov was marked by an extreme level of administrative manipulation and an apparently questionable vote tabulation process. SPS's single-mandate candidate Vladimir Yushakov campaigned very actively, holding public discussions and events on issues identified as important to voters and to SPS (military reform, local governance, and corruption, for example), and employing a canvassing strategy that reached more than 80 percent of the homes in his district. Yushakov consulted with NDI on a regular basis, after attending several training seminars on campaign techniques and participating in an NDI-sponsored study mission to Washington, DC (funded through the Library of Congress' Open World program).

Despite the fact that Yushakov was an incumbent SPS State Duma deputy, he was barred from the free media and most paid media, shut out of many venues, and faced periodic loss of electricity at his headquarters. Even so, in his district, SPS garnered slightly over four percent of the vote, significantly out-pacing support for the party throughout the rest of Saratov oblast (at 2.83 percent). Yushakov himself won 5.76 percent of the vote in his single-mandate race, placing third in a field of a dozen.

Yabloko Sverdlovsk

NDI's Urals office worked more intensively with Yabloko Sverdlovsk than with any other party branch. During the summer of 2003, NDI and Yabloko conducted a local-issue public discussion series focusing on government transparency issues. The discussions were designed to help the party create a strong local identity as a group of active reformers with concrete, realistic ideas. During the events, party leaders highlighted their ideas for improving government procedures and allowing citizens more access to their representatives. Discussions were held in Irhit, Talitsa, Tylym and Ekaterinburg – focusing on the areas where Yabloko Sverdlovsk's most active members would campaign in upcoming elections.

Following these events, NDI consulted regularly with Yabloko Sverdlovsk leader Yuri Kuznetsov, who took part in the September 8 gubernatorial election. The results of the election surpassed expectations. In areas where joint Yabloko-NDI local issue discussions were held, with follow-up grassroots outreach activity, Kuznetsov won the highest percentage of the vote.

As a result of his gubernatorial campaign, Kuznetsov rose in the State Duma race from an unknown to the main challenger of Barinov, who was supported by both the newly elected governor and United Russia. In November, several polls commissioned by Kuznetsov showed that he was either leading or within one to two percentage points of Barinov. On election day, with more than 80 percent of the vote counted, NDI and Golos observers reported that Kuznetsov was leading and appeared to have won. However,

when final numbers were placed on the board at the conclusion of the vote counting, Kuznetsov had dropped to third place (17.89 percent), and Barinov had won (36.16 percent).

Golos immediately filed complaints, and the CEC declared that the results did not meet the criteria to be validated as final. The Commission ordered that the race be rerun in a by-election. However, faced with even more severe pressure, Kuznetsov decided against running again. Instead, he made the decision to focus on issue-oriented advocacy campaigns to attempt to influence public policy.

NDI closed the Ekaterinburg and Saratov offices in 2004, following a criminal investigation against a former Saratov employee. The Institute determined that it could provide adequate management and security to regional offices only by staffing them with internationals, which would have required more resources than were available. Following the closure of the offices, NDI/Moscow staff continued to make periodic visits to those regions to follow-up with NGO and party initiatives.

In Moscow, NDI focused primarily on developing Yabloko's and SPS's internal training capacities in advance of the 2003 elections. The Institute adopted this approach in recognition that a multiplier effect would be necessary for NDI's modest resources to have impact. In addition, after 10 years of practice, the problem for parties was not a lack of expertise, but rather the concentration of the expertise among a very narrow strata of party activists. The knowledge needed dissemination throughout the organization as a resource for election campaigns and party building. NDI developed a structured SPS internal training program that provided extensive professional development support to 35 hand-picked trainers, who were then assigned to leadership positions in campaigns in highly-targeted districts for the Duma elections. This program helped SPS identify promising branches across Russia as well as individuals who could play leadership roles in regional campaign efforts. It also improved internal party communication and imposed some structure on the party's preparations for the 2003 elections. The Institute also organized a four-stage training-of-trainers program for Yabloko in the spring of 2003. This program had a lower profile than the SPS effort due to Yabloko's hesitance about associating too closely with Western organizations in late 2002 and in 2003.

Throughout the agreement, NDI provided assistance to party branches facing municipal and/or oblast-level elections. The Institute also offered ongoing assistance to regional branches on general party-building topics, including organizational structure and voter outreach. In 2001, for example, NDI consulted with local party candidates and campaign managers organizing for elections to the Moscow, Astrakhan and Leningrad city councils. The sessions covered voter contact techniques, campaign budgeting, message development, media relations, and organizing election teams. The Institute followed-up on these seminars with training for party pollwatchers. Topics included an overview of the role and purpose of election monitoring, fundamental elements of the election law, and procedures for addressing violations. In 2004, NDI conducted a seminar on party outreach, election planning and coalition building strategy for the newly formed "Astrakhan Deputies' Club." The Club consists of approximately 25 former, incumbent

and potential local Duma deputies. The members represent all non-Kremlin-aligned parties in the Astrakhan region: Yabloko, the Communist Party, SDPR, the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) and SPS. NDI assisted members of the Club in basic coalition building strategy and the creation of non-competitive campaign agreements, in addition to basic party outreach strategy.

In advance of the 2003 elections, NDI hosted a series of roundtable discussions on what was then a new election law and on the electoral environment. The purpose of these discussions was to open communication among the range of participants in the elections and to help educate them on new procedures. These discussions typically included representatives from political parties, the Central Election Commission as well as regional commissions, the presidential administration, and NGOs.

Following the 2003 and 2004 elections, as many non-Kremlin-aligned parties struggled to maintain or regain a level of relevance, NDI's political party program entered a less active phase. The Institute maintained contact with national and regional political leaders and closely monitored party developments. The Institute conducted a wide-ranging assessment with the aim of identifying individuals and organizations that could benefit from NDI's assistance in the new political environment and advised interested parties on developing systematic membership recruitment campaigns to meet new registration requirements. The Institute met only modest enthusiasm for the registration assistance, however, and by the close of this agreement, the political landscape had not clarified sufficiently to suggest other obvious avenues for intensive work.

Throughout the agreement, NDI has reached out to a wide range of parties beyond Yabloko and SPS, including SLON, the Social Democratic Party of Russia (SDPR), Unified Russia, the People's Party, Our Choice, Soldier's Mothers, Party of Pensioners, Party of Life, and others. Although NDI maintained open lines of communication with these groups, none was sufficiently viable and democratically oriented to merit or request sustained technical assistance. The Chair of NDI's Board of Directors, Madeleine Albright, visited Moscow in late 2004 with the objective of demonstrating international solidarity with struggling pro-democracy groups.

Most of the Institute's programs with parties rely on close and sustained consultative relationships with individual parties. In NDI's experience, this type of program has proven far more effective than large programs or seminars involving multiple parties, which cannot be as precisely tailored to the needs of particular organizations.

B. Civic Organizing

NDI's civic organizing activities focused primarily but not exclusively on Golos. Golos is the only national organization in Russia that specifically works to address issues of government accountability and citizen-government interaction on the national level. As a national organization made up of local coalitions, Golos is in a unique position to advocate nationally for greater government accountability, while simultaneously working on the local level to activate citizen involvement in government. While elections are a prominent focus of the group's efforts, between elections, Golos works on a broad range

of issues connected with democratic development. The Institute also provided technical assistance to several national and regional NGOs on conducting advocacy campaigns. The underlying aim of all of NDI's civic organizing activities was increasing citizen participation in political life.

In 2001, NDI traveled extensively with Golos leaders and staff to identify new locations for and establish regional branches. Golos expanded from five to 15 branches in that year, including Astrakhan, Ekaterinburg, Chelyabinsk, Yaroslavl, Vladivostok, Samara, Saratov, Irkutsk, Nizhny Novgorod, Petrozavodsk, Vladimir, Ryazan, Kaliningrad, St. Petersburg, and Krasnodar. Alongside experienced Golos activists, NDI provided regular training and guidance on topics such as election monitoring, organizing issue advocacy campaigns, and fundraising.

NDI and Golos cooperated in 2002 to establish interregional centers in Astrakhan, Samara, Tambov, Moscow and Novosibirsk. The interregional centers were established Golos branches designated to serve as day-to-day mentors of nearby branches and liaisons between branches and Moscow. The Institute also provided extensive training to Golos activists on advocacy. Meanwhile, Golos's 15 branches conducted local election monitoring and monitoring of regional deputies.

In addition to assistance for Golos, NDI provided training in 2001 to the human rights groups Memorial, the Forum of Migrants, and the Chechen-Ingush Cultural Center of Ekaterinburg on enhancing the effectiveness of their advocacy efforts. With NED funding, NDI provided consultations and training in 2003 to two regional civic organizations in Sverdlovsk – Raduga and Cheliabinsk Oblast Without Drugs.

Raduga was formed by multiple sclerosis (MS) patients in Sverdlovsk. The group's mission is to advocate the government to provide access to the latest drug treatments, as well as increasing the awareness of the Russian public to the problems facing MS sufferers. NDI conduct seminars for the group on advocacy techniques. After working the NDI, the group increased its membership from 400 to more than 500 and formed a coalition with several unions of medical personnel. Together, these organizations presented a petition to the Minister of Health during a meeting arranged with the assistance of NDI. Raduga also presented draft legislation to the regional Duma. The Duma later passed the legislation, with the Health Ministry's support.

Cheliabinsk Oblast Without Drugs is a civic organization dedicated to pressuring the regional government to enforce existing legislation regarding treatment for those infected with HIV/AIDS, as well as introduce new legislation that would provide the latest drug treatments. NDI conducted seminars on basic advocacy techniques.

NDI began deemphasizing work with non-Golos NGOs in late 2003 so assistance to Golos could be maximized as State Duma and presidential elections approached.

Golos's long-term monitoring of the Duma elections started in September 2003. The effort consisted of monitoring the formation and work of electoral commissions,

monitoring the conduct of the election campaign, and monitoring voting and tabulation procedures on election day. NDI assisted with the creation of Golos's monitoring strategy, helped create a manual for election monitors, implemented a training of trainers program on election monitoring for all branches, assisted Golos with its own trainings for its 4500 monitors, conducted national and regional consultations on report writing, conducted a seminar on financial reporting in Moscow, provided consultations for new regional coordinators on staff management, facilitated meetings and communication between Golos and election authorities, assisted Golos as it applied for new funding sources, provided consultations on regional civic advocacy in Yaroslavl, Samara and Ekaterinburg, conducted consultations on media relations with Golos's Moscow staff, and assisted Golos with the distribution of its electoral findings to international media.

For the presidential election in 2004, Golos conducted long-term campaign monitoring in 10 key regions and, due to limited resources, only partial campaign monitoring throughout the rest of its regions. Golos conducted full election-day monitoring in all of its regions. In the lead up to the election Golos uncovered attempts to artificially inflate voter turnout. On election day, Golos noted what it termed "massive" irregularities in vote counting. NDI advised Golos on a day-to-day basis, particularly on how to deal with security officials, how to limit vulnerabilities, and how to work with staff to make them feel more secure. The Institute helped Golos create a system for efficiently collecting information from the regions. NDI also conducted training on election monitoring for volunteers.

Following the Duma elections, Golos, Transparency International, the Moscow Helsinki Group, the Center for the Study of Contemporary Politics and InDem approached NDI for help in combining their resources to draw attention to election abuses and advocate on behalf of more democratic elections. The group held a conference in March 2004 entitled, "Are Free Elections Possible in Russia?" NDI Board Chair Madeleine Albright met with the Free Elections Coalition founders in October 2004 to applaud and encourage their advocacy efforts. NDI helped facilitate regular Coalition meetings and advised on strategy.

The Free Elections Coalition formed the core organizing impetus for the Civic Congress, a 1500-participant conference held in December 2004. Representatives of political parties, NGOs and business from around Russia convened to express their concern about authoritarian trends and commitment to advancing democracy. NDI helped plan the event and provided training on facilitation methods for the conference's break-out session moderators.

200 Golos monitors participated in an observation mission of the European Network of Election Monitoring Organizations (ENEMO) to the runoff and repeat runoff rounds of the Ukrainian presidential election in late 2004 and early 2005. This activity was supported by a separate grant from USAID, but it gave Golos additional expertise in election monitoring, connections to 15 other domestic observation organizations from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, and exposure to the possibilities for democratic change when disparate groups coalesce in pursuit of a common goal.

In 2004 and 2005, NDI and Golos provided training to interregional center staff and conducted monitoring training to branches in advance of local elections. NDI aided Golos in opening new branches in Voronezh, Ufa, Perm, Volgograd and Maikop early 2005. NDI staff traveled alongside Golos leaders to each of these locations to assess potential coalition members, identify possible leaders, and strategize. NDI also worked with Golos's Moscow staff to elaborate a more rigorous evaluation and accountability system for its regional network, including a reward system for branches that perform well. In 2005, Golos also began consulting with NDI on plans for monitoring in 2007, on the assumption that monitors would through some means gain access to polling sites. Russia has 96,000 polling stations. Ninety thousand of these are in 50 regions, covering 90 percent of the population. Golos and its partners in the Free Elections Coalition intend to focus on those 50 key regions. The current goal is to station monitors in 25 percent of the 90,000 stations. This would require a minimum of 23,000 observers.

C. Duma

In late 2001 and early 2002, NDI conducted some modest program activities in the Duma. NDI provided preliminary advice to the ethics committee on formulating ethics guidelines. This initiative shortly faded, however. The Institute also advised SPS and Yabloko on meshing their legislative agendas and facilitated a joint SPS-Yabloko conference on this topic. Again, this project lost momentum as the two parties drifted apart. Due to limited resources and a restrictive political environment, NDI increasingly shifted attention and resources away from the Duma and toward political party work as the 2003 Duma elections approached.

IV. PERSONNEL

Under this agreement, NDI/Moscow was headed successively by Alina Inayeh and Daniel Kunin, as co-directors, Terry Horton, and Jennifer Hengstenberg. Ms. Inayeh served as a civic trainer and Mr. Kunin as a political trainer. Ms. Horton and Ms. Hengstenberg both divided their attention between the two programs. The directors were assisted by Russian program and administrative staff, including civic and political program officers, regional office coordinators, an office manager, an accountant, and other administrative support.

V. RESULTS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS

A. Political Party Development

Although it was not anticipated in the objectives NDI outlined in its proposal for this agreement, it is worth noting that, with intensive assistance from NDI, SPS developed and implemented a comprehensive internal training program in advance of the 2003 Duma elections. The participants developed detailed party-building and campaign

strategies, based on regional peculiarities, for 35 oblasts. New party trainers conducted six regional seminars for regional party leaders.

Objective 1: Strengthen regional representation of political parties.

Indicator: democratic parties have established coordinated plans for identifying key segments of the electorate through demographic research and have implemented coordinated voter outreach policies across regional organizations.

Both SPS and Yabloko gathered detailed demographic research in advance of the State Duma elections and used it to identify their electorate. They were not successful, however, in identifying effective means to reach that electorate.

Indicator: parties have established systems for coordinating and developing membership among their regional branches.

Yabloko, whose membership policies were highly exclusive throughout the 1990s, with significant NDI encouragement, liberalized its approach in 2001. Both SPS and Yabloko also established policies for increasing membership in advance of the 2003 Duma elections. SPS used a system of targets for regional chapters. Yabloko set up a financial incentive program. The fact that both parties developed conscious systems for addressing membership recruitment was itself an improvement. However, the policies did not make an appreciable difference in the parties' overall strength in 2003 parliamentary elections, partly due to heavy manipulation by the Kremlin in support of the "party of power," United Russia.

Objective 2: Improved party contacts with NGOs.

Indicator: democratic parties develop policies on relations with NGOs, and high-ranking leaders of the parties become responsible for developing and implementing these policies.

To NDI's knowledge, this indicator was not met. In the run-up and aftermath of the 2003 parliamentary elections, national party leaders were primarily focused on party survival and did not give priority to developing such policies.

Indicator: parties cooperate with NGOs to rally the support of citizen interest groups, both during and between election periods.

The best examples of party cooperation with NGOs are the Free Elections Coalition and the 2004 Civic Congress. The Free Elections Coalition formed in the wake of the 2003 Duma elections when several prominent NGOs and political parties joined forces to protest and draw public attention to misdeeds conducted during the elections. NDI played a key role by advising on coordination strategies and providing a neutral venue for meeting. A particularly tangible outcome of this cooperation was the Civic Congress, which was held in December 2004. The one-day Congress brought together 1500

political party, NGO and business leaders to express their joint commitment to a more democratic future for Russia. The meeting was unprecedented in Russia, where the democratic movement has been notoriously fragmented, for the range of voices it brought together on behalf of a common cause.

Objective 3: Cooperation and coalition-building among like-minded parties.

Indicator: democratic parties have systematized their mutual cooperation both in policy advocacy in the legislature and in elections.

In 2001, the SPS electoral bloc transitioned to a political party, further institutionalizing cooperation among what was previously a wide assortment of parties. SPS and Yabloko have frequently cooperated on an *ad hoc* basis, particularly at the regional and local levels. In regional and local elections, for example, the two parties commonly agree to coordinate their slates to avoid competing against one another. However, the Moscow headquarters of the two parties have consistently failed to find ways to join forces systematically. They made efforts to mesh their legislative agendas in the Duma, even forming a coordination council in early 2000. This momentum gradually dissipated, though, and the coordination council ceased meeting in 2002. No serious discussions of cooperation for the 2007 and 2008 elections had been entertained by the close of this agreement. The fundamental obstacle that the two parties cannot overcome is their different stances toward the presidential administration. Although both have essentially democratic, reform-oriented agendas, SPS has been willing to work through the Kremlin, while Yabloko has positioned itself more squarely in opposition. This disconnect has proven difficult to bridge, particularly in an environment of outsized personal political ambitions. Frustrated with the impasse between the two major parties in the democratic camp, other political leaders, such as Irina Khakamada, Vladimir Ryzhkov and Gary Kasparov, have struck out on their own. These entrepreneurs have presumably hoped to rally the wider movement behind them, but have instead contributed to fragmentation.

Objective 4: Cooperation of parties with elected officials.

Indicator: democratic parties have established systems of regular contact with their affiliated State Duma deputies and have used such systems to develop common policy agendas, maintain regular contact with constituents, and monitor citizen concerns.

Indicator: democratically oriented factions in the State Duma work more cohesively and effectively to promote their policy agendas in the legislature.

Indicator: political parties play an enhanced role in political discourse regarding proposed legislation affecting parties, media freedom, NGO activity, and citizen participation.

Following the 2003 Duma elections, when Unity received a constitutional majority and SPS and Yabloko, the only remaining democratic groups in the previous parliament, lost their representation, NDI ceased activities linked to the Duma. The dominance of a

single “party of power” meant that the Duma would no longer play even the limited representational and oversight roles it had previously held. Parties, in turn, would no longer have a significant role in shaping legislative outcomes. As such, NDI did not contribute to progress on these indicators.

B. Civic Organizing

Objective 1: Help Golos develop a permanent, self-sustaining, national organization with a defined structure and operating procedures.

Indicator: Golos appoints a permanent full-time executive director and restructures its board of directors to adequately represent Golos’s geographic and institutional diversity.

Golos made significant progress in this indicator. Golos hired a full-time director, Lilia Shibanova, in 2001. She remains in the position to this day. The staff expanded to include a media relations manager, a regional coordinator, and administrative assistant, and several accountants. In late 2002, Golos set up interregional centers. In 2004, the previously hands-off board of directors became more involved in Golos’s day-to-day operations, as a result of Kremlin pressure, and expanded from four to five. However, the board has not yet fully restructured. In 2005, Golos began registering its USAID grant with the Commission on International Technical Assistance, constituting another step for Golos in maturing as an organization and conforming to Russian law.

Indicator: Golos establishes new affiliate coalitions in diverse regions that develop and implement election monitoring and issue advocacy programs.

Golos expanded from five to 15 branches in the second half of 2001, and from 15 to 30 in the first half of 2003, at which point it covered three-quarters of the population. The number of branches dropped from 30 to 23 in 2004, through post-election attrition and active culling of low-performing organizations. At the close of the grant, Golos was preparing to launch a new expansion campaign to bring the total number of branches to more than 40 in 2006.

Indicator: Golos develops a diverse funding base consisting of both Russian and international donors, including local funding for local advocacy efforts.

Golos has demonstrated the capacity to attract diverse funding. In 2001, it received a grant of \$250,000 over two and a half years from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. Grant funds were used to maintain and strengthen VOICE affiliates in 15 regions and support limited election monitoring and advocacy activities. It also received grants from the Eurasia Foundation, the Open Society Institute and the Ford Foundation in 2001. It has found, however, that a massive and focused campaign such as federal election monitoring depends on having a coherent, reliable source of funding. By the close of the agreement, Golos received most of its funding through a multi-year USAID grant, in addition to Mott Foundation money and annual support from the NED. Although this

funding base may have room for further diversification, it serves as a necessary source of support for an important mission.

Objective 2: Strengthen Golos's skills in organizing election monitoring, voter education and issue advocacy programs.

Indicator: *Golos conducts a nationwide monitoring effort around the 2003 parliamentary and local elections.*

Golos conducted Duma election monitoring in 30 regions. It issued four preliminary electoral statements, three post-election statements and a final report, based on detailed, factual information gathered from all affiliates. For the presidential election, Golos issued three preliminary statements, a post-election statement and a final report.

The Duma elections were a watershed for Golos. For the first time, the organization's leaders fully grasped their responsibilities and rights as representatives of their members, and began to expose attempts to violate electoral laws and interfere with the distribution of information to the public. Golos assessed the elections more openly and more consistently than any other international or domestic organization and received an impressive amount of press coverage for its work. For the presidential election, there simply was no other domestic source for independent, credible election information.

Indicator: *local Golos branches conduct issue advocacy programs in cooperation with local government and/or political party organizations, which result in positive measures to address community concerns.*

In 2001, several Golos branches conducted advocacy activities. Golos/Yaroslavl successfully advocated for passage of a local law requiring publication of the city budget. Golos/Astrakhan published a directory of local elected officials. Golos Ryazan published a directory of local lawmakers and began publishing a weekly newsletter. The directories and newsletter laid the foundations for citizens to contact their local representatives.

Indicator: *Golos contributes to public knowledge of the rights and responsibilities of voters in the cities and regions where the coalition works.*

In all of its regions, Golos conducted activities designed to educate voters about their deputies, their responsibilities as voters, the requirements of a free and fair election system, and the function of election commissions.

Objective 3: Help civic organizations other than Golos cooperate with local government and political institutions to address local community priorities.

Indicator: *civic organizers demonstrate improved ability to formulate strategic plans and organize advocacy projects around their issues in direct engagement with local government and political party organizations.*

In 2003 and 2004, several regional NGOs conducted successful advocacy campaigns. Raduga in Ekaterinburg got a law passed.

Indicator: civic organizers cooperate with political party activists to help formulate policy objectives.

The Free Elections Coalition offers one of the best examples of cooperation between political parties and NGOs. Yabloko, SPS and the Communist Party, among others, coordinated closely with the Coalition following the Duma and presidential elections to compile results, issue statements, submit complaints to election authorities and, when these were not satisfactorily addressed, to pursue corrections through the courts. Also, over the course of 2004, the Coalition worked in concert on many statements and events with Committee 2008. The main participants in Committee 2008 were political party leaders Gary Kasparov, Boris Nemtsov, Boris Nadezhdin (SPS), Irina Khakamada, Sergei Ivanchenko (Yabloko) and Aleksandr Yakovlev (SDPR), as well as Georgy Satarov (INDEM), Yevgeny Kiselev, Oleg Sysuyev, and Irina Yasina (Open Russia).

VI. EVALUATION/CONCLUSION

NDI's assistance to Golos has yielded impressive results. Golos has not met every objective that Golos leaders and NDI had set for it, as both underestimated the difficulty of building a nationwide organization across the span of Russia. The financial and human resources have simply been inadequate to the task. Moreover, Golos and NDI did not fully anticipate the strain that hostile government pressure could place on the organization. The harassment that Golos encountered, particularly in the wake of the 2004 presidential election, made it difficult for Golos to retain qualified staff and to recruit new branches and activists while maintaining the integrity of the organization's mission. Yet despite these difficulties, Golos not only survived over the course of this grant, but it expanded five-fold and established itself internationally and domestically as a respected and unique watchdog of election procedures. This achievement is commendable.

NDI's support to political parties has yielded few tangible results to date. Thousands of individual political activists throughout Russia have been equipped with advanced political organizing skills and many sub-national political party organizations survive and in some cases even thrive as a result of NDI's assistance over the years. These basic elements will be easily reassembled into new or reformed political parties once a new landscape begins to crystallize. Yet the prominent national democratic political parties were frankly weaker at the close of this agreement than they had been at the beginning. This development was due largely to a centralized political system that deliberately and systematically denied democratic parties the resources and opportunities that political parties around the world have used to establish themselves.

In addition, while Yabloko, SPS and other democratic political organizations used the language of party building, they failed to make sustained commitments to building solid

organizations up from the grassroots. Such efforts offered no guarantee of short-term electoral victory, much less long-term democratization. But they might have produced counterweights to the Kremlin's centralizing and dominating tendencies. As it turned out, Yabloko, SPS and others tended to get swept up in internal Kremlin maneuvering, a distraction that proved to be debilitating for those parties.

NDI's impact was blunted by the negative and largely unanticipated political trends. NDI had expected the Russian government to exercise more restraint in revealing its authoritarian tendencies. Had this assumption borne out, NDI's political party programs, in particular, might have had a more visible impact.

NDI's experience with regional offices in Ekaterinburg and Saratov was ultimately unsatisfactory. In a country Russia's size, the idea of expanding the Institute's reach through satellite operations remains compelling. However, NDI concluded that the offices required direct supervision from international staff to provide security in Russia's hostile environment, and also to assure the coherence and quality of programming throughout NDI/Russia. NDI closed the Ekaterinburg and Saratov offices when it became clear that NDI/Moscow's resources did not allow it to provide adequate support.

Despite these disappointments, NDI's strategy for Russia from 2001 to 2005 was fundamentally sound. The expectation of the emergence of democratic parties and an election monitoring organization with *nationwide* scope turned out to be unrealistic, particularly considering the modest level of resources involved. Yet NDI's efforts have nonetheless contributed to the strengthening and growth of NGOs uniquely prepared to play critical roles as election and government watchdogs. In addition, NDI's political party programs have contributed to the growth and professionalization of a large class of democratically-oriented political party activists. These individuals, some of whom are already organized into coherent if small groupings, will have the skills and networks to mobilize quickly and effectively when the appropriate circumstances arise.

USAID/Russia Results Tracking Table, SO 2.1, 5/08/03

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	INDICATOR DEFINITION AND UNIT OF MEASUREMENT	DATA SOURCE	BASE LINE DATA		2003		2004		2005 (thru April)	
			YEAR	VALUE	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual
Objective: strengthen regional representation of parties										
1. Members of one core group of internal SPS party trainers trained by NDI conduct at least 5 trainings.	Definition: Members of a core group of party trainers will be those trained by NDI as part of a TOT program. A "training" will be a session for purposes of instruction attended by at least 5 activists. Unit: Yes/No.	SPS, NDI	2002	N/A	Yes	YES	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2. Number (and percentage) of joint NDI/SPS trainings more than 50% financed by SPS.	Definition: A "training" will be a session for purposes of instruction attended by at least 5 activists. Unit: Number of trainings.	SPS, NDI	2002	3	3	0	4	0	5	0

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	INDICATOR DEFINITION AND UNIT OF MEASUREMENT	DATA SOURCE	BASE LINE DATA		2003		2004		2005 (thru April)	
			YEAR	VALUE	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual
			3. Party has established system of regular contact with its affiliated elected legislators to communicate constituent concerns and coordinate policies.	Regularly scheduled party-faction meetings are held, single mandate deputies visit regional party offices, etc. Unit: Yes or No.	SPS, Yabloko, NDI	2002	SPS-N Yab-N	SPS-N Yab-N	SPS-N YAB-N	SPS-Y Yab-Y
Objective: Voice develops permanent, self-sustaining, national organization										
4. Voice is maintained by a structure that is self-governing and internally democratic.	Definition: "Self-governing" shall mean an organization with a decision-making system independent of other organizations; "Internally democratic" shall be understood to mean that decisions are influenced by systematic solicitations of views from throughout the organization. Unit: Yes or No.	VOICE, NDI	2002	Yes	Yes	YES	Yes	YES	Yes	YES

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	INDICATOR DEFINITION AND UNIT OF MEASUREMENT	DATA SOURCE	BASE LINE DATA		2003		2004		2005 (thru April)	
			YEAR	VALUE	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual
5. Total number of VOICE affiliates.	Definition: the regional organizations officially affiliated as branches of the VOICE Coalition. Unit: Number of affiliate organizations.	VOICE, NDI	2002	10	30	30	35	25	45	23
6. Number of funders supporting Voice.	Definition: # of organizations contributing more than \$300, and # of individuals contributing more than \$10, to VOICE/Moscow, or directly to an affiliate in the course of the reporting year. Unit: # of organizational and individual funders.	VOICE, NDI, other funders	2002	3-Org. 0-Ind.	7-Org. 0-Ind.	4-Org. 0-Ind	9-Org. 50-Ind.	4-Org. 0-Ind	7	3-Org. 0-Ind
7. Amount of funding granted.	Definition: Total combined amount of non-USAID funding secured by VOICE/Moscow and affiliates. Unit: US dollars.	VOICE, NDI, other funders	2002	\$150,000	\$400,000	<u>Mott \$85K</u> <u>NED \$6000</u> <u>NDI \$225K</u>	\$500,000 including one Russian funder	<u>NED \$50K</u>	\$250,000 including one Russian funder	<u>Mott \$140K</u> <u>NED \$50K</u>
8. Voice has accounting systems conforming to international and Russian standards.	Definition: Accounting systems conform to Russian Generally Accepted Accounting Standards. Unit: Yes/no.	VOICE, NDI	2002	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	INDICATOR DEFINITION AND UNIT OF MEASUREMENT	DATA SOURCE	BASE LINE DATA		2003		2004		2005 (thru April)	
			YEAR	VALUE	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual
11. Number/percentage of VOICE affiliates that have monitored the most recent election in their communities and published timely, credible reports.	Definition: "Most recent election in their community" shall mean most recent local, regional election; "published" shall mean distributed to at least 75 different recipients; "timely" shall mean within 30 days following the publication of official election results; "credible" shall mean based on well-documented, factual reports from trained observers who monitored a representative sample of polling stations. Unit: Number and percentage of affiliates.	VOICE	66%	100%	100%	100% (30 out of 30)	100%	100 % (25 out of 25)	100%	100% (23 out of 23)
12. Number of civic advocacy campaigns conducted by VOICE	Definition: Number of campaigns conducted to increase citizen involvement in the political process. Unit: Number and percentage of affiliates.	VOICE	2002	0%	15	100% (30 out of 30)	25	100 % (25 out of 25)	40	100% (23 out of 23)