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Final Report
WEST BANK AND GAZA STRIP
BUILDING AN INFORMED AND ACTIVE CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE
WEST BANK AND GAZA STRIP
USAID Grant No 294-A-00-96-90571-00
October 1996 to December 1998

I SUMMARY

The historic Palestinian elections of January 1996 marked the first time that Palestinians living in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem elected national representatives. With the election of the Ra'ees¹ and the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC), the institutional basis for accountable governance in the West Bank and Gaza Strip is being established. These elections, however, do not guarantee the success of democracy in the Palestinian territories. Democracy requires not only the legitimacy of democratic forms – such as competitive, multipartisan elections – but also functioning democratic structures and environments. Crucial elements of a democracy is an informed citizenry and organizations that hold institutions and leaders accountable. In recognition of this, Palestinian citizens and the civic organizations that represent them expressed interest in learning about the principles of a democratic society and the function that citizens can play in promoting better governance. In addition, a vibrant community of Palestinian civic organizations sought assistance in learning how to make the transition from their long tradition as service providers, a role the new governing authorities had assumed, to public policy advocates.

However, despite these significant advances in Palestinian democracy throughout the period of this grant, the uncertainties and setbacks in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process created an environment which was not conducive to the development of Palestinian democracy. For instance, in September 1996, the Israeli government decided to open an archaeological tunnel beneath the Dome of the Rock, providing the spark that led to violent battles between Israeli and Palestinian security forces. Also, the Israeli troop redeployment in Hebron (which was originally agreed upon in the Oslo II Accords in 1995) was renegotiated and not implemented until January 1997, further eroding goodwill and confidence between the two sides. In addition, expanded Israeli settlement activity at Har Homa (Abu Ghneim) in March 1997 and suicide-bombings in July and September 1997 put added strains on the peace process. All of these events heightened political tensions and led to numerous security closures of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, impeding the ability of Palestinians, including Civic Forum employees, to travel. The National Democratic Institute's (NDI) successes with Palestinian civic organizations and citizens' groups during this grant period should be measured in light of the above-mentioned adverse political circumstances.

¹Arabic Chairman or President



The second component of NDI's civil society assistance program, the Civic Activities project was designed in response to a need on the part of Palestinian civic organizations to play a more active role in the public policy-making process. Building upon the base of knowledge regarding democratic principles and practices -- and the enthusiasm to participate -- developed by Civic Forum, this project component strengthened the capacity of a number of Palestinian civic groups to participate constructively in the public policy making process. This objective was based upon the precept that when citizens get involved in public decision-making, their government is compelled to be more responsive and accountable to their interests.

NDI worked with organizations that represented large citizen constituencies and are mostly members or affiliates of the network of co-sponsoring organizations involved in NDI's civic education program, Civic Forum. Through this program, NDI provided training to targeted organizations in the development of strategic plans to influence public policy making, training to develop these groups' organizational capacity to plan a campaign or advocate for a public project, and, the production and distribution of an advocacy manual, entitled "*How to Get Things Done in the West Bank and Gaza: A Guide for NGOs*". The Civic Activities program focused on the advocacy process rather than issues. For instance, through its work with the General Union of the Disabled (GUD), NDI's program provided a model of Palestinian advocacy for others to emulate. NDI's objective in implementing this component of its civil society assistance program was to provide Palestinian civic organizations with the tools and capability to make their positions on public issues known.

Over the course of the grant period, NDI accomplished the following:

- In June 1998, NDI's three-year civic education program, Civic Forum, was established as an independent organization committed to advancing the democratic development of the Palestinian territories. The Forum has grown into a popular feature of democratic activity and boasts the largest, nonpartisan grassroots network in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Through hundreds of moderated, community-based discussion groups and the regular distribution of printed materials, the organization enables more than 5000 Palestinians every six weeks to both understand democratic institutions and practice democratic concepts. Civic Forum's establishment as an independent organization ensures that these efforts to build an informed and active civil society in the West Bank and Gaza Strip will be sustained after NDI's departure.
- Through Civic Forum discussion sessions, companion handouts and quarterly newsletters, NDI was able to raise awareness among a significant percentage of the Palestinian population about key issues related to democratic principles, processes and institutions. This program included over 50,000 Palestinians in regular discussions about topics ranging from elections and political parties to the role of the media and the rights and responsibilities of citizens. Program participants have used this knowledge to hold their representatives in government accountable and to organize civic activities to address local problems.

by NDI forums that explained the manual's contents, and how the guide can be used to plan and implement advocacy initiatives

II BACKGROUND

A Political Context

On January 20, 1996, Palestinians in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem exercised their political will for the first time by voting for the Ra'ees of the Palestinian Authority and the members of the Palestinian Legislative Council. These elections provided the institutional basis for accountable governance in the Palestinian territories, but by no means ensured democracy's success. Successful democratic development requires that citizens and voters understand ideas about civic life, politics and government so that they can make informed decisions about what government should and should not do, and about how to support the proper use of authority. Likewise, the presence of active and effective civic organizations that can aggregate citizen's concerns and communicate those concerns to decisionmakers is crucial.

Although Palestinians consistently demonstrate great awareness and sophistication regarding current events and developments, NDI's experience in the West Bank and Gaza since early 1994 has indicated that a general lack of practical knowledge persists regarding basic democratic practices and institutions, including a lack of experience with procedures of democratic decision-making. Following the 1996 elections and the establishment of new institutions, Palestinians expressed a keen interest in learning about the role these new institutions should play in governing and the function that citizens can play in promoting better governance. NDI's Civic Forum was designed in response to this need, and served to engage a broad cross section of Palestinians in a continuing series of interactive, multifunctional discussions that allow participants to examine universal ideas relating to democracy in the context of the Palestinian transition process. The understanding developed through these discussions helped participants play a more active and effective role in the democratic life of their society, by exercising their rights as citizens and voters and, ultimately, holding their elected officials accountable.

In addition, the community of Palestinian civic organizations recognized the need to make the transition from service providers, a role the new governing authorities assumed, to public policy advocates. The Palestinian NGO community traditionally played a prominent role in the lives of Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. It filled the gap presented by the absence of a functioning governing authority and a coherent economic system. Even since the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, the NGO community continues to provide a number of primary services – such as health care and housing assistance, education and training, and human rights and legal aid – to Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. In order to develop a constructive relationship between the Palestinian NGO community and the Palestinian Authority, NGOs needed to shift their focus from providing services to advocating in support of public policies. This shift required new skills and strategies. NDI's civic activities project was designed to assist Palestinian NGOs in developing those skills and strategies.

NDI's program activities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip throughout the duration of this grant were undoubtedly affected by the tense political environment in the Palestinian territories resulting from the faltering peace process. Efforts by Palestinian democrats to encourage citizen participation in a pluralistic, democratic society and to concentrate on the task of "democracy building" were hampered by the desire of the population to present a united front against the Israeli government's actions. Moreover, the geographic separation between the West Bank and Gaza Strip, compounded by the frequent and unpredictable nature of closures, presented a significant challenge to a civic education program dependant upon the dissemination of information through weekly meetings and workshops, and to the institutional development of Civic Forum as an independent and sustainable Palestinian non-governmental organization. In this difficult climate, NDI, through its civil society assistance programs, sought to provide a calm environment in which a dialogue on democracy and civic activity could occur freely and openly.

B Summary Outline of Previous NDI Programs

The programs that NDI conducted prior to and concurrent with this grant are outlined below.

I Initial Assessment Mission (Funded by the National Endowment for Democracy, November - December 1993)

A six-member assessment mission to Tunis, Israel and the West Bank and Gaza Strip, that determined that there was widespread support among Palestinians for elections, concerns about the possibilities for free and fair elections and broad support for outside assistance.

II Middle East Studies Program (Beginning in September ,1993, funded by the National Endowment for Democracy)

An ongoing program that allows NDI to bring Palestinian, and other Arab political activists and officials to participate in democratic development activities in other countries.

III Start-Up Program (Spring 1994, funded by the National Endowment for Democracy)

A Public Meetings Program A series of meetings to provide information about other democratic transitions.

B Election System Design Consultations Providing information and advice to the Commission on Elections and Local Government about options for elections systems.

IV Phase 1 (funded by USAID through IFES, designed for four months, but extended to 12 months because of delays in the election calendar)

A **Civic Education** A pilot program designed to determine, through the use of focus groups, effective mechanisms for civic education, and to conduct an initial civic education activity through moderated discussions based on themes presented in a “how-to-participate” poster

B **Public Forums on Citizenship and Democracy** A series of public forums designed to stimulate dialogue between Palestinian Authority officials and citizens groups while at the same time providing information on electoral processes and public participation

C **Support for Young Women’s Participation** A series of eight seminars conducted with women in four locations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip on two themes methods of participation in the democratic process, and techniques of campaigning and voter education

V Phase 2 (funded by USAID from October 1, 1994 through December 31, 1996)

A **Civic Education** The creation of the Civic Forum program, including the training of Palestinian moderators, the establishment of a network of local organizations that met monthly for civic education discussion sessions, and the distribution of written civic and voter education materials

B **Support for Young Women’s Political Participation** Training provided through workshops and seminars in the techniques of political participation to young Palestinian women This portion of the program was implemented through a subgrant with the Jerusalem Center for Women

C **Domestic Election Monitoring** Training in domestic election monitoring techniques and a subgrant was provided to the Palestinian Domestic Monitoring Committee for the January 20, 1996 elections

D **International Election Monitoring** Comprehensive monitoring of the January 20, 1996 elections through in-country observers, two pre-election missions and a 40-member international election delegation organized in cooperation with The Carter Center

VI Post-Election Activities with the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) (funded by USAID)

A **PLC Assessment Mission** From March 4 to April 10, 1996, NDI organized an assessment mission to evaluate the obstacles and opportunities before the Council

B **Basic Law Workshops** NDI conducted two workshops on the Basic Law in May 1996 The workshop provided a forum for Council Members to speak with experienced legislators about constitutional issues, particularly issues related to executive-legislative relations

C **Other Activities** NDI drafted a memorandum in August 1996 which set forth procedures for plenary consideration of legislation in Australia, Great Britain and the United States NDI also organized a day-long summary focusing on legislative oversight of the executive for a delegation of six PLC members who visited Washington in mid-August 1996

D Building the Capacity of the PLC This 18-month program consisted of a series of activities designed to address four major topic areas (1) the role of committees in a legislature, (2) plenary organization, (3) legislative-executive relations, and (4) constituency relations. These topics were highlighted in workshops and study missions that provided PLC Members with comparative information from legislatures around the world. The topics were further complemented through a series of mini-workshops, a retreat and the provision of relevant materials on all topics in Arabic.

III PROGRAM GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The envisioned result of this program was to increase the informed participation of civil society in public decision-making. The goal included first, an increased understanding among Palestinians of the role of citizens and civil society in the formal, democratic decision-making process, followed by an increase in the active participation of Palestinian citizens and civic groups in public policy processes. NDI aimed, overall, to promote constructive communication and dialogue between Palestinian citizens and the officials they elected.

The anticipated intermediate results were

- Formation of a more informed and active citizenry
- Increased activity among Palestinian citizens reflecting their desire for access to the public policy-making process, and
- Strengthened capacity of numerous civil society organizations to make known to the Palestinian Authority and other Palestinians their positions on public issues

Expected outcomes of the two-component program were the following

- Maintenance and expansion of the network of local organizations and local coordinators involved in civic education
- Increased understanding among a significant proportion of Palestinians of key components of institutionalized democracy, such as the rule of law, constitutionalism, government transparency and accountability, citizen participation, advocacy, and civil society's role in public decision-making
- A larger number of informed citizens actively endeavoring to influence public decisions in a constructive and lawful manner
- Greater capacity of civic organizations to develop mechanisms for promoting democratic participation in the political process and adequate, constructive debate of public policy issues, including the use of print and broadcast media

- Strengthened familiarity among Palestinians with, and support for, the public policy advocacy of issue-based national organizations
- Formation of an autonomous, wholly Palestinian Civic Forum committed and able to continue civic education on a sustained basis after NDI concluded its assistance program

IV PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

NDI's civil society assistance program in the West Bank and Gaza Strip consisted of two integrated, concurrent components: Civic Forum, a civic education program that seeks to provide a foundation for well-informed citizen involvement in the public policy-making process, and the Civic Activities Project (CAP), a program to increase Palestinians' ability to access and influence the public policy making process.

A Civic Forum

1 Civic Education Program Activities

NDI's Civic Forum program was designed to strengthen the foundation for participatory democracy by increasing Palestinian understanding of democratic principles, processes and institutions. Started in August 1995, Civic Forum operates through regularly discussions held every six-weeks, by NDI-trained moderators with small cross-factional groups of Palestinians throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The principal activities of Civic Forum include: 1) civic education discussion sessions on topics of democracy with Palestinian men and women, 2) collection, production, and dissemination of civic education materials complementing Civic Forum discussion topics and a quarterly Civic Forum newsletter, and 3) practical application activities, such as townhall meetings with Palestinian Authority officials and PLC Members, and 4) the development of Civic Forum as an independent, sustainable Palestinian-run organization capable of continuing NDI's democratic development activities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

In 1995, Civic Forum began its civic education program activity with 11 moderators holding 20 discussions a month throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In response to requests from additional organizations to hold discussions and concern over the low numbers of women's participation in Civic Forum (and a USAID evaluation confirming this assessment), NDI decided to expand the program and increase the participation of women. In August 1996, the number of Civic Forum moderators holding sessions doubled to 22, thereby doubling Civic Forum's capacity for community and women's outreach.

Discussions

The cornerstone of NDI's Civic Forum program is a series of moderated discussions led by NDI-trained Palestinian civic education moderators. Civic Forum discussions are organized in cooperation with existing civil society organizations, who provide the venue for the discussions and

invite the participants. Each month the moderators lead tailored discussions with these groups on different democracy-related topics. Through these sessions, participants discuss issues and arrive at an understanding of the topic using metaphors from their daily lives to understand the issues under discussion. The sessions are intended to be open discussions, not lectures, as the format is intended to build participants' self-confidence, foster an appreciation for a diversity of opinions, educate participants about democracy, and inspire them to become active in civil society and the public policy-making process.

From October 1996 to December 1998, Civic Forum moderators held discussions on the following topics:

- Political Parties in a Democracy
- The Role of NGOs in a Democracy
- The Future of NGOs in the West Bank and Gaza Strip
- Legislative-Executive Relations and the Budgeting Process
- The Role of the Judiciary in a Democracy
- Civic Action and Democracy

As "Civic Action" represented the end of a two-year, 15 topic cycle which began under the previous USAID grant², participants who attended a consistent number of sessions were rewarded with a graduation certificate. Plans were made to follow up with graduates on advocacy work in their communities. This new program component will be discussed in detail below.

In December 1997, Civic Forum initiated the beginning of a new, condensed discussion format covering six topics from December 1997 to September 1998. According to feedback from a district-by-district review and focus group research, this new "cycle" proved more realistic than holding 15 discussion topics over two years as the shorter period provided a better time frame for participants who wanted to complete the Civic Forum curriculum. In addition, the final topic in the cycle was modified to encourage more direct action by participants. Supplementary training on organizing advocacy campaigns and practice sessions was held with moderators before these sessions in preparation for the special approach granted to this topic. The sessions were less moderated discussions and more leading groups through a process of identifying the goals and activities their organization would like to achieve, and providing participants with the tools to achieve them.

Moderators were encouraged to promote modest and achievable civic projects. The moderators consulted with participating organizations over the next few months to determine the

²Topics from the first cycle, conducted under the previous USAID grant, include *The Palestinian Electoral System*, *Individual Rights*, *The Rule of Law in a Democracy*, *The Relationship between Citizens and Elected Representatives*, *The Constitution*, *How a Bill Becomes a Law*, *The Role of the Citizen in Democracy* and, *The Role of the Media in a Democracy*.

success of the activities. The ability to constructively engage Palestinians on issues of public policy is an important result for the overall program.

Civic Forum Moderators held the following discussions under the new civic education cycle:

- Democracy, Individual Rights and the Constitution
- Citizens and Elections
- Separation of Powers
- NGOs and Local Governance
- Political Parties and the Media
- Citizen Advocacy

During the course of this grant, NDI's Civic Forum program included over 45,000 Palestinians in these discussion sessions, and developed a network of over 400 participating civic groups. [A detailed breakdown of participants is included in the Results and Indicators section.] Program participants have taken their new knowledge into their communities by organizing civic activities to solve local problems. Armed with an understanding of their rights and a new appreciation for petitioning government, participants have called on governing authorities to improve water and sewer systems, urged action on pollution, started schools and sports clubs, built soccer fields, and volunteered their time to community efforts. According to independent focus group research, Civic Forum participants are more likely than nonparticipants to understand and apply democratic principles, and are more inclined to use dialogue and compromise to resolve disputes.

Town Hall Meetings

In response to requests from local cosponsoring organizations that NDI Civic Forum organize activities outside of regular sessions, NDI Civic Forum staff arranged a regular series of townhall meetings and panel discussions in districts throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip. These meetings brought the public together with Palestinian Authority officials, PLC Members and other relevant individuals to discuss topics of current interest, such as the drafting of the Basic Law, the independence of the judiciary and the drafting of the PA budget. These meetings were organized in cooperation with committees of local coordinators and Civic Forum volunteers in each district. A total of 20 town hall meetings were held during this grant period. Each meeting was attended by approximately 135 participants each, for a total of 2700 participants.

Field Activities Unit

In January 1998, NDI's Civic Forum instituted an advocacy component to its program with the development of the Field Activities Unit. Following the November 1997 staff retreat, Civic Forum envisaged advocacy as an integral part of its program because it encouraged interested civic education participants to apply their knowledge toward change in their community. This was also

seen as a way to harness the knowledge and enthusiasm of program “graduates,” and keep them involved in democratic development activities

The Field Activities Unit is a training unit consisting of three former Civic Forum discussion group moderators, one in the Gaza Strip and two in the West Bank. These three individuals, known as Field Activities Officers, provided discussion facilitation training to former program participants who wish to moderate discussion sessions and to Civic Forum network organizations and participants on a variety of issues, ranging from organizing public meetings to setting long-term goals for an advocacy campaign.

This new program component enabled Civic Forum moderators to focus their work solely on conducting civic education sessions, while expanding the program’s reach by engaging former Civic Forum participants in complementary activities, such as townhall meetings. For example, the Field Activities Officers organized committees of current and past program participants, and provided them with extensive training in organizing the logistics, invitations, and follow-up involved in town hall meetings. The town hall committees proved to be a great success, with some committees even holding additional town hall meetings in their immediate communities. In addition, the establishment of town hall meetings, combined with the training of 153 volunteer moderators, has succeeded in creating a dedicated corps of citizens who now possess the skills needed to organize events.

Dissemination of Information Through Printed Materials

In addition to the moderated discussions and town hall meetings, NDI’s Civic Forum published and distributed printed materials meant to supplement and reinforce the information and democratic concepts and principles presented in discussion sessions. The main printed materials were handouts, which were specific to each discussion topic, and a quarterly newsletter published in both Arabic and English, *Al-Ufuq* (Horizons), which contained broader information about the program and general themes Civic Forum sought to emphasize.

Approximately 12,500 handouts were distributed for each Civic Forum discussion topic. Likewise, approximately 10,000 copies of the *Al-Ufuq* newsletter were handed out on a quarterly basis. During this grant period, six editions (four in Arabic and two in English) of *Al-Ufuq* were produced. Printed materials enabled Civic Forum to reach a broader audience, as participants shared these materials with friends and family, thereby increasing the number of people exposed to Civic Forum’s democracy education.

2 Institutional Development Program Activities

An integral component of NDI’s long-term strategy for civil society assistance in the West Bank and Gaza Strip was the establishment of an independent, professional, and sustainable Palestinian organization capable of continuing democratic development work in the Palestinian territories after NDI’s departure. NDI thus devoted significant time and resources to assisting Palestinian Civic Forum staff members in the development of Civic Forum as an independent,

Palestinian-run civic education organization. This strategy entailed instituting a gradual shift in program responsibility from American NDI staff in the West Bank and Gaza Strip to Palestinian NDI staff and was supplemented by a series of institutional development training programs in order to build Civic Forum's organizational capacity. Led by NDI-recruited, *pro bono* experts to assist in Civic Forum's development as an independent NGO, these trainings reflected the current needs of Civic Forum staff, ranging in subject from "Moderation Skills" in January 1997 to "Fundraising" in August of 1998.

Moderation Skills Workshop, January 1997

As Civic Forum primarily delivers information through moderated discussions and written handouts, how much participants learn and whether they return depends in large part on how moderators conduct their sessions. NDI thus devoted considerable time and financial resources to helping moderators further develop their moderation skills. In January 1997, NDI invited Steve Bengston, Vice-President of Viewpoints Research, to the West Bank and Gaza Strip to provide Civic Forum moderators with new ideas for advanced moderation techniques. A professional focus group moderator, Bengston systematically reviewed the basic moderation techniques Civic Forum moderators were already using, suggesting new techniques such as "word-underlining"³ and "triggerboard exercises"⁴ to vary Civic Forum's discussion format and make discussions more interesting. He also suggested changing the way the Civic Forum Moderators' Guide was written to make the discussion topics more relevant to the everyday concerns of the Palestinians. Bengston also worked with the moderators to increase their self-confidence, enabling them to be more creative in their discussions and respond more effectively to participants' needs.

As a result of the Moderation Skills workshop, Civic Forum undertook a comprehensive revision of the moderator guide-drafting process. Past moderator guides had focused heavily on facts and figures rather than suggestions to enhance the discussion process, leading moderators and participants to treat Civic Forum sessions as lectures. This approach took away from the educational value of the discussion. The new approach allowed participants to explore the concept and principles of democracy in a way that formal lectures did not.

Likewise, following the training Civic Forum moderators became responsible for drafting the moderator guides, a four to five-page document consisting mainly of questions to use in steering

³In a word-underlining exercise, participants are given a sheet of paper with a list of words underneath the general headings. The participants are asked to underline the words that they feel relate to the item in the heading. Based on the words the participants underline, the moderator comes up with quick conclusions about the sentiment of the group. This technique helps jump-start discussions by enabling the moderator to understand the perceptions of the group.

⁴A triggerboard is a statement that is intended to elicit an emotional reaction from the participants, it is usually a provocative statement meant to divide the discussion group in an effort to stimulate discussions.

discussion of a topic. Because it was crucial that the moderators have a firm understanding of the discussion topics, ample background information continued to be provided and discussed at weekly moderators' meetings.

The new format of the moderator's guides yielded three main results. Because the guides were shorter and consisted mainly of questions, they were more user-friendly to the moderators in planning their sessions. Furthermore, the lack of facts and figures in the guide itself required moderators to be more flexible in their discussions and more responsive to the participants' needs. Finally, by involving the moderators in the guide-drafting process, they felt more ownership in the program and more empowered to use their own resources and creativity to make the discussions interesting and educational at the same time.

Staff Retreat on Creating an Independent Palestinian NGO, February 1997

In February 1997, NDI organized a four-day all-staff retreat in Gaza City facilitated by Heather Booth, founder and former president of the Midwest Academy, an educational institution training leaders and organizers in skills and strategies of building membership organizations. The main goals of the staff retreat were to discuss the future of Civic Forum and to explore the many questions surrounding the idea of creating an independent Palestinian NGO from a civic education organization established by NDI in August 1995.

Booth introduced the strategic planning process to the Civic Forum staff. Based on this discussion, the staff agreed that the organization had three main goals:

- To increase citizen awareness and knowledge about democratic institutions and practices (thereby increasing Palestinians' power and willingness to participate)
- To develop initiators of change - democratically oriented community leaders
- To empower Palestinian NGOs, promoting cooperation and advocacy skills

Booth then addressed the "nuts and bolts" of organizational development. The second half of the retreat focused on the personnel and administrative issues involved in creating an independent organization, covering topics such as the recruitment of support, time management, Civic Forum team relations, and the future of NDI-Civic Forum Relations.

The staff retreat closed with the formation of committees to focus on refining the goals of Civic Forum, based on the four main goals that the moderators suggested for the organization. These committees were civic education and awareness raising, leadership development, encouraging popular participation in the decision-making process, and empowering NGOs.

Also resulting from the staff retreat was the decision by Civic Forum staff that Palestinian staff would assume greater day-to-day management of the program and would draw Civic Forum moderators into the administration of the program. After the retreat, moderators agreed to come into the office at least once a month to assist in various administrative tasks, such as translating post-staff retreat questionnaires. In addition to helping in the office, the coordinators implemented "peer monitoring" within Civic Forum, with moderators required to attend and/or listen to tapes of other moderators' sessions.

District-by-District Review

Having developed both a mission statement and goals for the future Civic Forum, an important additional step in preparation for independence was for staff to confirm the utility of Civic Forum's current civic education program and to determine the need for these activities over the next several years. In September and October 1997, NDI Civic Forum staff conducted a district-by-district review of its program activities to assess the impact of Civic Forum on participants. This review represented the most comprehensive internal evaluation of the program to date. In each district, ten local organizations that consistently work with Civic Forum were selected for meetings with Civic Forum administrative staff, and each moderator was asked to hold one session in which five participants with a record of good attendance filled out a questionnaire.

The results of the district-by-district review indicated continuing support for the Civic Forum program, and the refinement of their comments indicates a clear impact on participants' understanding of civic education. Participants offered constructive criticism on details such as the content of handouts and the frequency of discussions. Civic Forum staff prepared a report on the review the following month.

Focus Group Research, October 1997

Following the February staff retreat, Civic Forum management and moderators implemented a strategic planning process which involved the formation of moderators committees formed to discuss future goals for Civic Forum. The short and long-term goals, and potential supporters, opponents, resources, and obstacles outlined in these report, in addition to the results of the district-by-district review undertaken a month earlier, provided the basis for focus group research in October 1997.

In October 1997, NDI recruited Viewpoints Research, a Canadian-based consulting firm, in order to provide an objective, external comparison to Civic Forum's district-by-district review of its program activities. Steve Bengston trained independent moderators to facilitate eight sessions with Civic Forum participants and ten sessions with nonparticipants comprised of teachers, students, and civil society leaders in order to assess Civic Forum's impact on participants. The focus group results confirmed the outcome of the internal review - that Civic Forum was increasing Palestinians' ability to understand the concepts of democratic governance. The focus groups also indicated that Civic Forum participants were ready for more direct, advocacy-related activities in their communities.

Group participants cited enthusiasm with the *Civic Action* topic and how it prompted civic projects in their community. Civic Forum also learned from the research that teachers and students enthusiastically endorse the idea of Civic Forum for Palestinian youth.

Strategic Planning Retreat, November 1997

From November 10-13, 1997 a strategic planning retreat for Civic Forum staff was held in Antalya, Turkey. Reflecting on recently completed district-by-district review and focus group research evaluation, the purpose of the retreat centered around two, interdependent goals: to organize 1998 program activities, and to further discuss and plan Civic Forum's development as an independent institution. Participants agreed upon the goals and mission statement of the future Civic Forum organization, drafted the fiscal year 1998 workplan, and debated issues relating to the institutional development of Civic Forum, including fundraising, establishing a board of directors, staff structure, and the budget. During the retreat, staff also discussed potential advocacy opportunities relating to Civic Forum. A tentative date for entering a subgrant with NDI was set for April 1, 1998. Following the staff retreat, the institution of an advocacy component was advanced by the promotion of three Civic Forum moderators to Field Activities Officers (FAOs) who would train volunteer moderators and work with co-sponsoring organizations in strategic planning and advocacy. The FAOs received training from CAP director Kate Head.

Following the November staff retreat, Civic Forum released the final version of a mission statement and completed a list of prospective board members.

In February, 1998, two of Civic Forum's new Field Activities Officers attended an NDI-sponsored seminar in Prague, Czechoslovakia for civil society organizations working in the field of advocacy. The purpose of their attendance was two-fold: to expose Civic Forum to the strategies of similar organizations in other parts of the world and to help the FAOs with specific advocacy skills.

Management Training Workshop, March 1998

In March 1998, NDI conducted a management training workshop for the Civic Forum administrative team. Jennifer Coken, an NGO management consultant from Washington, DC, and her colleague Michael Rawlings, were recruited as *pro bono trainers* to facilitate the workshop. The organizational training focused on reviewing the mission statement and goals of Civic Forum, developing an organizational chart with decision making responsibilities (including relationships between the board of directors and Civic Forum, and between Civic Forum administrative staff and moderators), and deciding fundraising, time management and communication strategies for the new organization. The trainers also held separate workshops with the West Bank and Gaza Strip moderators on how to effectively utilize a volunteer network. This three day intensive training enabled the team to collectively address the challenges that Civic Forum will face in the coming months and beyond as it becomes an independent institution.

Following the management workshop, Civic Forum staff developed several internal mechanisms to facilitate organizational planning, including holding regular weekly meetings, scheduling program events with a master calendar, recruiting a board of directors, and using samples from the trainers to guide the process of by-law development

Additionally, Civic Forum made significant progress toward becoming an independent institution by developing a proposal and budget for a cooperative agreement with NDI and finalized candidates for its Board of Directors. A lawyer was also hired to help with the NGO registration process, draft personnel policies, draft by-laws for the organization and open a bank account

Civic Forum Established as an Independent Palestinian NGO, June 1998

After nearly three years as an NDI program, Civic Forum formally announced its establishment as an independent Palestinian organization committed to democratic development. Prior to this announcement, Civic Forum staff recruited a nine-member board of directors, which held its first meeting, drafted by-laws, drafted and submitted to NDI a proposal for a cooperative agreement, and signed a Memorandum of Understanding with NDI which aims to structure relations between the two organizations over the course of the next year.

On June 18, NDI and Civic Forum hosted a reception to celebrate the new organization's establishment. Nearly 300 guests, including cabinet ministers, Council members, and Palestinian NGO leaders attended the inaugural reception. NDI Board member and former U.S. Chief of Protocol Molly Raiser traveled to the West Bank and Gaza for the inauguration festivities. Raiser, a veteran civic activist, also shared her experience on developing civic organizations, including discussions on the issue of board-staff relations, with Civic Forum staff.

After establishing itself as an independent NGO, Civic Forum and NDI entered into a cooperative agreement arrangement. NDI provided Civic Forum with a subgrant to fund its activities through the end of this grant period. [The original end date of the grant was September 30, 1998. USAID approved an NDI request for a no-cost extension to continue the subgrant through December 31, 1998 in order to sustain Civic Forum until such time as it was able to secure direct grant funds.] NDI continues to provide organizational development training and consultations to Civic Forum with National Endowment for Democracy funds.

Fundraising Training, July 1998

From July 6-19, 1998, NDI held a fundraising training for Civic Forum management staff, conducted by veteran fundraiser Polly Agee. Agee helped Civic Forum create a realistic fundraising plan which included materials and message development, donor research, and deadlines for submitting proposals to funders. This training enabled Civic Forum to begin fundraising in anticipation of Civic Forum's financial independence from NDI. In the months following this workshop, Civic Forum developed donor prospect forms, sample letters of inquiry to potential funders, several proposals for potential funders, and a fundraising timeline based on organizational goals.

Financial Capacity Building, September 1998

In September 1998, NDI enlisted the services of a Palestinian accounting firm affiliated with Price Waterhouse. The firm, Sa'adi, Farrage, Orfaly, worked with Civic Forum management staff on developing and implementing financial and management systems that would allow the new organization to manage direct grant funds from other donors.

In addition, Civic Forum installed the accounting software, Hashavshevet, and Office Manager. Muhammad Abu Diab was trained on its use. The software training strengthened Civic Forum's capabilities to enter receipts and invoices, issue checks for employees and services, develop accounting code numbers for all expenses and learn how to enter and track expenses using specific codes, and develop accounting code numbers for all employees to facilitate the payment of salaries.

3 Results and Indicators

Result 1 Expansion and maintenance of the network of local organizations

At the start of this grant, NDI and USAID agreed that NDI's Civic Forum program would aim for a network of 360 Palestinian civic groups and that by the end of the grant, the network would comprise a similar or greater number of organizations. The table below details the number of sponsoring organizations and participants. There was an average of 331 organizations participating in the network during this grant period. This decline in groups is a result of the establishment of the field activities unit and the resulting decrease in the number of discussion group moderators. This unit was established in January 1998 and coincided with the beginning of the second cycle of discussion sessions. At that time, NDI Civic Forum concluded that the high level of interest in advocacy training among program graduates warranted a slight shift in program resources that allowed for this training to be provided without significantly reducing the civic education component of the Civic Forum program.

In addition, the uncertainties and setbacks in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process created an environment which was not conducive to the participation of civic organizations in Civic Forum's sessions. For instance, in September 1996, the Israeli government opened an archaeological tunnel beneath the Dome of the Rock, providing the spark that led to violent battles between Israeli and Palestinian security forces. Also, the Israeli troop redeployment in Hebron (originally agreed upon in the Oslo II Accords in 1995) was renegotiated and not implemented until January 1997, further eroding goodwill and confidence between the two sides. In addition, expanded Israeli settlement activity at Har Homa (Abu Ghneim) in March 1997 and suicide-bombings in July and September 1997 put added strains on the peace process. All of these events had the effect of heightening political tensions and led to numerous security closures of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, impeding the ability of Palestinians, including Civic Forum employees, to travel. In light of the above-mentioned adverse political circumstances, Civic Forum's ability to continue to attract an average of over 5000 participants per topic is testament to the organization's importance and centrality in the development of Palestinian democracy.

Dates	# of Sessions	# of Participants	# of Male Participants	# of Female Participants	# of W Bank Participants	# of Gaza Participants
Jan-Mar 1997 Topic 12	344	5156	2676	2480	3329	1827
Apr-Jun 1997 Topic 13	375	6171	3045	3096	3330	2841
Jul-Sept 1997 Topic 14	400	6363	3111	3252	3745	2618
Oct-Dec 1997 Topic 15	347	5575	2400	3175	3265	2310
Jan-Mar 1998 Topic 1	310	5354	2210	3144	2630	2724
Apr-Jun 1998 Topic 2	323	5071	2868	2203	2478	2593
April-Jun 1998 Topic 3	274	4178	1793	2385	1985	2193
Jul-Sep 1998 Topic 4	315	4117	1578	2539	2423	1694
Jul-Sep 1998 Topic 5	315	3765	1578	2187	2343	1422
Oct-Dec 1998 Topic 1	310	4625	1930	2695	2790	1835
Totals	3313	50,375	23,189	27,156	28,318	22,057
Total %			46 0%	54 0%	56 2%	43 8%
Average	331	5038	2319	2716	2832	2206

Result 2 Number of participants involved in civic education

At the start of this grant, NDI and USAID agreed that NDI's Civic Forum program would aim for 6,000 to 7,500 regular participants involved in civic education, and that by the end of the grant, the program would involve a similar or greater number of participants. As detailed in the chart above, the Civic Forum program involved an average of 5,038 participants in each discussion session. The shortfall in participants can be attributed to several factors. First and foremost, the establishment of the field activities unit reduced the number of discussion group moderators who were available to conduct session. As a result, general levels of participation dropped. However, it should be noted

that prior to the establishment of the field activities unit, participation was well above the anticipated level. Also, the level of participation in sessions was effected greatly by the prevailing political environment. Sporadic violence, frequent closures of the territories and related political difficulties make travel within the West Bank and Gaza Strip unpredictable and led to reduced numbers of sessions and participants. This reduced number of participants in the regular discussion sessions, however, was compensated by the work of the field activities officers, who continued to involve hundreds of Palestinians in ongoing civic education activity.

Result 3 Steps taken toward the creation of an independent Civic Forum operating as a Palestinian NGO with a network of civic society organizations that sponsors civic education sessions in all areas of the West Bank and Gaza and disseminates information about democratic principles and certain public policy issues

At the start of this grant, NDI and USAID agreed that NDI would aim by the end of the first year to achieve the following: Palestinian administrative staff is increased and their skills developed, mission statement drafted, organizational structure designed, plan for recruiting a Board of Directors established, and steps taken toward hiring an accountant/accounting firm taken. By the end of the grant it was anticipated that Civic Forum would move to a cooperative agreement relationship and at least partial independence from NDI.

Though for various reasons, the timetable on some of the indicators mentioned above shifted slightly, all were achieved and by the end of the grant period Civic Forum had achieved total independence from NDI and received promises of direct funding from USAID. Copies of the Civic Forum mission statement, organizational structure, by-laws, Board of Directors, and cooperative agreement with NDI are included as appendices to this report.

B Civic Activities Project

The second component of NDI's civil society assistance program, the Civic Activities project was designed in response to a need and desire on the part of Palestinian civic organizations to play a more active role in public policy decision making. NDI first and most clearly perceived this interest through its Civic Forum program. Towards the end of Civic Forum's first year in 1995, participants began telling NDI that they would like to get more involved in influencing the policy choices that affect them. The Civic Activities project built upon the base of knowledge regarding democratic principles and practices -- and the encouragement to participate -- developed by the Civic Forum program. The Civic Activities program provided training to targeted organizations in methods and strategies to put this knowledge into practice.

NDI's objective in implementing this portion of its program was to strengthen the capacity of a number of Palestinian civic groups to participate constructively in the public policy making process. This objective was based upon the precept that when citizens get involved in public decision-making, their government is compelled to be more responsive and accountable to their interests.

NDI's baseline assessment (Spring 1997) of Palestinian NGOs' capacity to engage in advocacy efforts established that these types of organizations best meet four important criteria for undertaking successful advocacy a) a strong membership base, b) decentralized leadership (i.e., a national leadership and local branch leaders), c) a long-term issue agenda that necessitates building and maintaining relationships with government officials, and d) the institutional capacity to conduct ongoing activities

NDI worked with organizations that represented large citizen constituencies and were mostly members or affiliates of the network of cosponsoring organizations involved in NDI's civic education program, Civic Forum. These target groups fit into three categories

- 1) organizations representing youth,
- 2) organizations working to advance the rights of disabled Palestinians, and,
- 3) Civic Forum (as an organization) and other cosponsoring organizations in the Civic Forum network

NDI provided technical assistance to organizations which met this criteria in three main ways

- 1) training targeted organizations in the development of strategic plans to influence public policy making,
- 2) training to develop these groups' organizational capacity to plan an issue campaign or advocate for a public project, and,
- 3) provision of an advocacy manual, geared towards Palestinian society, and other appropriate informational and training materials

NDI's Civic Activities program focused on the advocacy process rather than on issues. NDI's objective in implementing this component of its civil society assistance program was to provide Palestinian civic organizations with the tools and capability to make their positions on public issues known. Beyond this technical assistance, NDI did not assist organizations in furthering these issues. Rather, the program focused on engaging target organizations in the advocacy *process*, a process involving strategic planning, policy and message development, media relations, and lobbying legislators⁵. In order to engage participants in this process, NDI frequently recruited local officials and Palestinian Authority ministers to participate in training sessions, thus allowing organizations a first-hand perspective on advocacy which they would not have otherwise had. This process also involved working with some organizations on institutional development and capacity-building to improve the management and operation of their programs in order for them to more effectively advocate issues of concern.

⁵It should be noted that there were a number of discussions between NDI and USAID regarding the aims and methods of this program (see attached correspondence, CAP Appendix F)

In training sessions with targeted Palestinian organizations, NDI worked with participants to help them 1) identify a realistic program goal and budget, and 2) list decision-makers, allies, opponents, and obstacles to achieving this goal. NDI then helped participants formulate tactics to overcome these obstacles. Other program components included the identification of general tactics, i.e., finding office space, staff, and/or equipment, and setting a tentative budget alongside each tactic. These program markers were then incorporated into an activity time line. The process used for these meetings not only built the capacity of participating organizations, but also promoted skills such as group brainstorming and decision making, both integral parts of the advocacy process.

The majority of program activity consisted of planning sessions, role playing, and practice sessions with group evaluations. In planning sessions, groups were able to choose their own goals, their own tactics, and create their own budgets and timelines. As a result, their work was far more applicable than it would have been working through hypothetical examples. The end result was a plan and product, the progress and success of which NDI could monitor.

1 Program Activity

Baseline Assessment, March 1997

In March 1997, NDI met with 60 Palestinian civil society organizations (CSOs) and individuals over a six week period in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem to conduct a baseline assessment of the interest and readiness of Palestinian civil society organizations to engage in advocacy work. Following this baseline assessment, NDI published a report describing the developmental needs of the civil society community, the role these organizations play in Palestinian society, the political context under which they were operating, and the challenges they faced in their daily work. [A copy of this assessment is appended to this report.]

Based on the findings of the baseline assessment, and the current state of the Palestinian legal and political framework, NDI concluded that it would be fruitful to invest resources in building the capacity of civic organizations that represent broad constituencies to engage in the public policy-making process and to encourage government accountability to those broad constituencies. Democracy depends on these mediating institutions, which link citizens to their government and to one another by providing avenues for participation in public policy.

Following the baseline assessment, and consultations and training programs with individual Palestinian organizations conducted in the summer of 1997, NDI concluded that the organizations with the most potential for undertaking advocacy in the Palestinian context meet the following criteria: strong membership base, leadership at the central and local levels, a long-term issue agenda, and the institutional capacity to conduct ongoing activities. The assessment showed that four types of organizations best meet these criteria: 1) youth groups, 2) groups working to advance the rights of disabled individuals, 3) Civic Forum and its network organizations, and 4) professional associations or sectoral groups. NDI believed that these organizations were most suited in the context of Palestinian political and civil society to work toward advocating citizens' interests, influencing the public decision-making process and promoting a more responsive and accountable government.

The baseline assessment also revealed that the targeted organizations required more focused and tailored training, as each organization had a different level of capacity to undertake advocacy activities. NDI thus made the decision to focus on conducting smaller, tailored programs with each of the target organizations on an individual basis.

The General Union for the Disabled

The General Union for the Disabled (GUD) is a national organization of 5,000 members, organized into local chapters which focus on local issues. Traditionally, GUD chapters have dealt mainly with casework -- assisting disabled Palestinians to gain access to medical care, education and employment opportunities on an individual basis. Recognizing that these issues are part of the civil rights afforded all Palestinians, whether disabled or not, the GUD became interested in organizing a national effort to address disability access. Rather than continuing to work with separate schools, hospitals or places of employment, the GUD sought to lobby government officials -- in the PLC and in various ministries -- to mandate access and opportunities for disabled Palestinians. The GUD decided to begin this advocacy campaign with the issue of access to buildings.

NDI training with the GUD was conducted at the national and regional leadership level and included prioritizing goals, planning meetings, promoting national legislation or resolutions, utilizing the media, and developing an ongoing relationship with the Palestinian Legislative Council, the various ministries, and elected officials on issues of concern to disabled Palestinians.

NDI initially began training members of the GUD in preparation for Disability Week in December 1997. The training began with an initial meeting with the GUD two months beforehand in which 22 members attended. This meeting was followed by a two-day policy and message development workshop in November, which brought together members of the Union's central and branch offices to discuss the development of a national policy and message, and methods for bringing the message to decision makers in the PLC. NDI recruited PLC member Azmi Shu'abi to meet with the group to counsel them on how to define their needs, outline problems and solutions, and identify supporters. The outcome of these meetings was a week-long advocacy effort in which extensive media outreach and public demonstrations occurred, which was hailed as a major success by the media and other observers.

Following Disability Week, NDI sponsored a "Lobby Day" with the GUD that focused on the lack of legal rights for disabled people. Using a chapter of the advocacy manual "Lobbying the Council," the Institute trained 30 members of the GUD on lobbying skills and provided them with a form they could use to keep records of their interaction with PLC members. The Union prepared talking points and drafted a brochure entitled "What is Access?" to be handed out to PLC members. GUD members then spent a day attending a plenary session at the PLC, lobbying members about the issues of the disability rights and access.

As a follow-up to Lobby Day, NDI sponsored a GUD National Rights Leadership Retreat in December, which focused on the pros and cons of focusing on major rights versus the issue of

disability access At the retreat, the group determined the specific pieces of access (rights in employment, education, and non-discrimination), and defined the nature of access in terms of making buildings - both old and new - accessible to the handicapped With assistance from NDI, the group then developed an action plan for passage of access legislation, focusing on how to influence decision makers, mobilize allies, neutralize opponents, and how to effectively use the media in their access campaign Following the retreat, volunteer forms and petitions on access issues were created and circulated to collect names of potential members and to influence government

With assistance from NDI, the GUD began working with a lawyer to draft access legislation In March, 1998, a GUD conference was convened to present the legislation to GUD members from the West Bank and Gaza Strip Copies of the law were then distributed to all GUD members for review NDI trainers worked with the GUD on strategies for building allies, both within the PLC and in their communities, relations with the media, and how to write press releases and petitions in preparation for the legislation's public unveiling in May

In the weeks leading up to the conference, NDI worked intensively with GUD membership to provide assistance in drafting invitations, speeches and press releases, logistical support, provision of the draft law in Arabic, braille, and audio, and training GUD leaders in conference organization and preparation

On May 22, 1998, NDI and the GUD convened a conference in which the disability access legislation was formally unveiled The law and the conference alike represented the first time the disability community asked for their rights to have access to public places like government buildings, hospitals, schools, and businesses In attendance were over 300 people, including officials of the Palestinian Authority, Fathi Arafat (president of the Red Crescent Society and brother of Yasser Arafat), and Azmi Shu'abi, chairman of the newly established disability caucus in the PLC

At the conference, Council Member Shu'abi commended the work of the GUD, pointing out that the GUD's work represented the first time that an outside group had drafted legislation for consideration by the Council, as well as the first time a caucus was created in the Council He noted that the legislation would be the first of its kind in the Middle East, and commended the GUD for setting an example by using the legislature as a vehicle for their advocacy issues, representing a foundation of democracy

One week after the conference, the PLC passed the "zero" reading of the access legislation It has since been referred to the Social Affairs Committee for review

Youth Groups

The youth groups with which NDI worked included the Gaza-based Palestinian Youth Association and the West Bank-based Palestinian Youth Union, and the Union of Youth Centers These organizations represent the majority of all youth-related activities in the West Bank and Gaza

Strip and are community-based organizations interested in influencing policy at both the local and national levels

The Palestinian Youth Union

The work of the Palestinian Youth Union (PYU) focuses on villages and cities in the West Bank. PYU members possessed the most advanced skills and most developed agenda of the three targeted youth associations. The Union requested assistance from NDI in developing relations between community-based youth clubs and their respective village councils, having identified inter-organizational problems resulting from a lack of communication. The youth groups, for example, tended to ignore the village councils, which led the youth groups to focus on projects that fell within the village council's mandate. In turn, many of the village councils felt it was their responsibility to run the youth club. This lack of communication often created a situation in which the two were working at cross-purposes.

The goal of NDI's program with the PYU was to have the youth clubs engage the village councils in a dialogue that would lead to the formulation of policies to address community needs. Youth clubs and village councils could then work together to identify community priorities and identify policy options for addressing them. The program set out to accomplish several things: to teach youth club members important skills they can use in affecting government policy in all levels, to help establish a constructive relationship between government and civil society that would serve as a model for similar initiatives that arise at the governmental or civic level, and finally, to give notice to municipal officials and other government figures that they are accountable to the various constituencies within the municipalities they represent.

At the outset of NDI's work with the PYU, five villages were targeted within the West Bank: Dır Istiya, Beit Dajan, Jifna, 'Aboud and the Jericho area. In each of the villages, the village councils and the youth clubs had identified a long list of public service projects that they were actively pursuing. These projects range from garbage collection and road construction, to other public services such as healthcare and education. Though these projects may sound outside of the mandate of a youth club, in Palestinian villages, youth clubs -- or relief societies, as they are sometimes called -- have traditionally taken a lead on these issues of public interest.

NDI initially worked with the youth groups and village councils to decide on and draft separate plans for addressing a local priority. These separate plans were then merged into a joint training involving both youth club and village council representatives. This strategy allowed the youth clubs and the village councils to develop skills that will allow them to plan and organize separately, but also gave them experience in working in partnership in order to address community needs. Likewise, through this joint activity, the different roles and responsibilities of each became more clear and tangible to the participants.

In the village of Dır Istiya, for example, both the youth group and the village council were focused on rehabilitation of their historic village center. Accomplishing this goal required the active involvement of both the youth club, who would provide the organization and the volunteers, and the

village council, who was also involved in mobilizing the community and finding the resources. The Ministry of Archeology and the Ministry for Local Affairs were approached for approval and involvement by representatives of the village councils and the youth clubs. The Dır Istiya village council and youth clubs drafted a work plan and a timeline, and organized more than 300 volunteers to do the manual labor that the Ministry of Archeology required.

Likewise, in the village of Beit Dajan, the youth club and the village council worked together to have a community services building constructed in the village. This building will contain the village council meeting rooms and records, athletic programs for youth, and a walk-in health clinic. This was an ambitious plan requiring substantial effort. Both groups committed to working toward this goal over a two year period. They have developed a workplan and a timeline, and are currently on schedule in getting community approval and searching for donated land.

In addition to this program that targets municipal government, the PYU became interested in organizing a national conference with their leading organizers on how to access government decision makers at the national level. They were interested, for example, in doing an analysis of the Palestinian Authority budget, paying particular attention to the Ministries of Education and Higher Education, the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Ministry of Social Affairs. This would be one of the first examples of a civil society organization reviewing budget priorities and then approaching the Palestinian Legislative Council to advocate for changes to the government's budget. The PYU planned to take the lead on this within the Council of Youth, an umbrella organization that contains many of NDI's partners: PYA, PYU, Union of Youth Centers and the General Union of Disabled.

Union of Youth Centers

The Union of Youth Centers (UYC) is an organization representing the youth clubs in the 19 West Bank refugee camps. Ten of these clubs are coordinating organizations within the Civic Forum program. The Union decided a number of years ago to decentralize and has since played a loose coordinating role between the member youth clubs. As a result of this decentralization, the youth clubs in the 19 refugee camps have focused mainly on issues that relate only to conditions within their camps. The UYC, however, became interested in developing a national agenda on refugee rights. This national agenda focused on public policy issues that affect refugees throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Priorities at the national level included education, healthcare, and sports and recreation programs for refugee youth. In drafting this national agenda, the UYC planned to develop a program to influence public policy on these issues at the national and local level. All of these issues require decision makers in the Palestinian Legislative Council and Palestinian Authority ministries, as well as at UNRWA, to make changes in public policies or priorities.

The UYC requested that NDI help the Union to develop advocacy skills among a group of the Union's organizers within West Bank refugee camps. NDI's program began with a series of regional meetings in the West Bank to develop inter-camp relations and a common agenda. Representatives of the individual youth clubs at these regional meetings then worked together to draft a year-long plan, detailing how each youth club would work to influence public policy, including

using media and volunteers, in support of the Union's national agenda. NDI worked to provide the youth leadership with skills in strategic planning, using the media and mobilizing volunteers. When possible, national meetings included training on how to lobby the Palestinian Legislative Council or relevant ministries. NDI then organized follow-up workshops after the initial regional meetings for the youth clubs to report the progress of their plans, as well as gain additional problem-solving, planning and organizing skills. In the interim, the UYC leadership followed-up with each of the individual youth clubs.

The Palestinian Youth Association (PYA)

PYA activities are mostly focused in Gaza refugee youth clubs, half of which are Civic Forum groups. Because the PYA's organizers are few in number, they were included in advocacy and organizational development workshops held with other organizations in Gaza. When appropriate, separate training sessions were organized with the youth clubs' board members and key volunteers. The objective of the PYA's program with NDI was to develop the skills of staff members and key volunteers in advanced advocacy and organizational issues. Once these staff members and volunteers were trained in these techniques, they began to organize campaigns to influence public policy on local issues. The PYA identified as priorities a wide variety of issues relating mostly to public services and education. Advocacy efforts regarding these public policy issues required communicating with municipal government officials and several Palestinian Authority ministries.

In May 1998, NDI completed a four-part training program with the Palestinian Youth Association, an organization representing eight refugee camps. In the first training session on "Media Relations," the General Director of the Ministry of Information (a former journalist) and a reporter from the newspaper *al-Ayyam* discussed with the group details of the Palestinian press law, that issues are important in the national and international press, and restrictions on press freedom. The second training focused on "Reaching the Community" and addressed the ways groups determine their needs before undertaking a project. Representatives of the Gaza Mental Health Organization, and the Civic Forum Deputy Director conducted the training along with NDI staff. For the session on "Volunteers," representatives from the Women's Affairs Technical Committee (WATC) participated in the training, which focused on how to recruit and maintain a network of volunteers. The final training on "Fundraising" focused on how to identify donors and create fundraising proposals. NDI staff, assisted by development expert Pat New, led the training. At the end of the four-part workshop, participants received certificates of completion.

Civic Forum and the Civic Forum Network

Throughout the duration of NDI's Civic Activities program, Project Director Kate Head spent extensive time with Civic Forum moderators, training moderators on issues related to the "Civic Action" discussion, organizing town hall meetings, and using the media as an effective tool for public outreach.

In January 1998, NDI began working with Civic Forum's newly implemented Field Activities Unit, consisting of three Field Activities Officers (FAOs) on message development, media skills,

coalitions, timelines, budgets, volunteer mobilization and organizational structure, and how to teach these skills to members of the Civic Forum network of civil society organizations. The FAO training was approached systematically, allowing each FAO to gradually build training skills through observation and practice. Through this approach, the FAOs were given the practical experience needed in order to conduct trainings on their own.

The Advocacy Manual *How to Get Things Done in the West Bank and Gaza Strip: A Guide for NGOs*

In June 1998, NDI completed and printed a 300-page advocacy manual, *How to Get Things Done in the West Bank and Gaza Strip: A Guide for NGOs*. The manual is intended to reinforce information covered during NDI workshops and extend this information to other members and organizations unable to attend the trainings. Throughout the entirety of the program, portions of the manual were used and tested in training sessions to gauge their effectiveness. In addition, NDI consulted with various Palestinian officials regarding certain chapters, including “Influencing the Village Council” and “Influencing the Ministries.” Upon publication of the manual, Kate Head organized three presentation events throughout the Gaza Strip to highlight the manual’s contents, with over three hundred organizations attending. Chapters of the manual include

- Strategic planning for Issues, Projects and Programs,
- Structures, Timelines, and Budgets,
- Rules of Lobbying,
- Influencing Ministries,
- Influencing the Palestinian Legislative Council (including lobby forms for contacting all Council members and vote count forms),
- Influencing a Village Council,
- Coalitions,
- Using the Media,
- Using Volunteers,
- Checklist for Events,
- Elections, and,
- Getting Things Done, which covers tactics in overcoming the many administrative problems that organizations face

Upon completion of the advocacy manual, NDI and Civic Forum moderators distributed 10,000 copies to a wide range of civic organizations, Palestinian Authority ministries, members of the Palestinian Legislative Council, public libraries, schools and universities.

2 Results and Indicators

Result 1 Civic Activities Project provides appropriate information and concepts used to organize efforts to communicate citizens’ interests to public policy decision makers

At the start of this grant, NDI and USAID agreed on the following indicators for measuring the achievement of this result after the first year of this program. NDI would conduct a baseline assessment, NDI would produce and disseminate a training manual, civic groups would request copies of the manual, and civic groups would begin to utilize the manual. It was agreed that the following indicator would be used at the end of the grant: manual, training and other information is utilized to organize efforts to communicate citizens' interests to public policy decision makers.

The baseline assessment and table of contents of the advocacy training manual are appended to this report. As previously mentioned, NDI distributed over 10,000 copies of the manual to interested civic organizations throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In addition, the Institute organized three presentation events throughout the Gaza Strip to highlight the manual's contents and explain how the manual could be used, with over three hundred organizations attending. As the manual was being produced, individual chapters were used as a basis for the training sessions conducted through this program. The following are specific examples of how the manual, training and other information provided by NDI were used by Palestinian civic groups to organize efforts to communicate citizens' interests to public policy decision makers:

- The GUD, in cooperation with NDI, held a week-long advocacy effort – “Disability Week” – in which extensive media outreach and public demonstrations occurred, which was hailed as a major success by the media and other observers.
- Following Disability Week, NDI sponsored a “Lobby Day” with the GUD that focused on the lack of legal rights for disabled people. Using a chapter of the advocacy manual “Lobbying the Council,” NDI trained 30 members of the GUD on lobbying skills and provided them with a form they could use to keep records of their interaction with PLC members. The Union prepared talking points and drafted a brochure entitled “What is Access?” to be handed out to PLC members. GUD members then spent a day attending a plenary session at the PLC, lobbying members about the issues of the disability rights and access.
- As a follow-up to Lobby Day, NDI sponsored a GUD National Rights Leadership Retreat in December, which led to the development of an action plan for passage of access legislation, focusing on how to influence decision makers, mobilize allies, neutralize opponents, and how to effectively use the media in their access campaign. Following the retreat, volunteer forms and petitions on access issues were created and circulated to collect names of potential members and to influence government.
- With assistance from NDI, the GUD began working with a lawyer to draft access legislation. In March, 1998, a GUD conference was convened to present the legislation to GUD members from the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Copies of the law were then distributed to all GUD members for review. On May 22, 1998, NDI and the GUD convened a conference in which the disability access legislation was formally unveiled. The law and the conference alike represented the first time the disability community asked for their rights to have access to public places like government buildings, hospitals, schools, and businesses. In attendance were over 300 people, including officials of the Palestinian Authority, Fathi Arafat (president

of the Red Crescent Society and brother of Yasser Arafat), and Azmi Shu'abi, chairman of the newly established disability caucus in the PLC

- At the conference, Council Member Shu'abi commended the work of the GUD, pointing out that the GUD's work represented the first time that an outside group had drafted legislation for consideration by the Council, as well as the first time a caucus was created in the Council. He noted that the legislation would be the first of its kind in the Middle East, and commended the GUD for setting an example by using the legislature as a vehicle for their advocacy issues, representing a foundation of democracy. One week after the conference, the PLC passed the "zero" reading of the access legislation. It has since been referred to the Social Affairs Committee for review.
- The GUD's experience is one that can be emulated by other Palestinian organizations as they work to influence policy.

Specific results of NDI projects with Palestinian youth organizations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip include

- With NDI's assistance, an unprecedented coalition of previously feuding youth and women's clubs in Jiffna, together with the Village Council, created a plan to rehabilitate the town's center. NDI worked with these groups to develop separate plans, then brought them together to work cooperatively to figure out the roles of each group and outside NGOs. Trainings with these groups also focused on how to work with and influence local government officials and PA ministers.
- NDI helped to avert a crisis when the Beit Dajan Village Council and youth club were about to give up on their plan for a community center. The Institute worked with each group individually to develop plans and then worked with the groups cooperatively to define a joint plan and the respective roles of the groups. NDI also trained the groups on how to mobilize support among local government officials and the Ministry of Youth and Sports. Through meetings with NDI trainers, alternative sights were developed and the plan for a community center got back on track.
- With assistance from NDI, several groups in Jericho began working together on developing a proposal for a local development project to be submitted to the mayor. The organizations also began lobbying for requests for municipal involvement to the Mayor and local government officials.
- NDI assisted the Youth and Village Councils in Dir Istiya in scaling down a plan for urban renewal, focusing the organizations on how to overcome obstacles to the project with time, money and responsibilities. NDI also worked with the Councils on how to work cooperatively with the Ministry of Archaeology, Ministry of Youth and Sports, local government, and local religious leaders.

- The About Youth Club is now working cooperatively with the Village Council. Together, the two groups have submitted a plan for a community center, and began work with municipal and local government leaders on the plan's implementation.

In conclusion, NDI had a positive impact on democratic development in the West Bank and Gaza Strip despite the adverse political circumstances which prevailed during this grant period. NDI's Civic Activities project, working with the General Union of the Disabled (GUD), sponsored a week-long advocacy effort which led to the first NGO-drafted legislation in the Palestinian Legislative Council. Also, NDI worked with various Palestinian youth organizations to implement community development projects and to create coalitions between the youth organizations and the local government leaders. Finally, NDI's Civic Forum program resulted in the establishment of an independent and sustainable Palestinian NGO which has grown into a popular feature of democratic activity and boasts the largest, nonpartisan grassroots network in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Civic Forum's establishment as an independent organization ensures the sustainability of democratic development efforts after NDI's departure.