



**CEPPS/NDI Quarterly Report: December 15, 2004 to March 31, 2005**

**NEPAL: INCREASING CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL PROCESSES BY  
STRENGTHENING POLITICAL PARTIES AND CIVIL SOCIETY**

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**I. SUMMARY**

Nepal's democratic development is now facing its most critical test following the restoration of democracy in 1990. In the years since the democratic movement of 1990, citizens' respect for political parties and democracy has diminished markedly in response to a string of unstable and unresponsive elected governments. Results from NDI's 2004 focus group research and nationwide polling show that political parties are widely perceived to be corrupt, self-interested and disconnected from the needs of the people. The King has used the parties' ineffectiveness as an excuse to consolidate his own rule over the last two years. Meanwhile, a deadly Maoist insurgency has taken hold of much of the countryside, filling the void left by unstable governments and capitalizing on dissatisfaction with the political elite. Both the elected Parliament and local government have been dissolved and new elections have been indefinitely postponed.

The ongoing political turmoil has perpetuated a cycle of conflict between the Maoists, the King and the political parties. Maoist rebels claim the King's consolidated rule justifies their struggle, while the King maintains that he took power to address the Maoist threat. Nepal's political parties have played a limited role in improving the situation, due in part to power struggles within and among parties, weak party foundations at the grassroots level, and pervasive corruption. The parties' lack of organizational capacity and political maturity has harmed their public image and ability to make a positive impact on the national political situation. Following the royal takeover, many political party leaders and activists have been imprisoned or placed under house arrest, further limiting the capacity of parties to advocate for the restoration of democratic government.

Despite the current restrictions on political party activists, the King has expressed his long-term commitment to multi-party democracy, and has indicated his desire to see political party reform and responsive grassroots development. Thus, there appears to be sufficient political space to work with political parties to support their efforts to reform and establish stronger links to their constituents. NDI is implementing a multifaceted program that will

approach Nepal's political impasse from three complementary angles. The program will: 1) facilitate efforts to restore representative democracy; 2) support the democratization of internal party governing structures and processes and encourage the development of new leadership in participatory, representative and accountable political parties; and 3) support civil society efforts to assess, advocate, monitor and report on the political reform processes. These activities will, in turn, help to reestablish the public's confidence in representative democracy. NDI and its partners will need to maintain flexibility in the implementation of these goals to respond to changing political conditions, and will adjust activities accordingly while maintaining the fundamental goal of supporting the restoration and strengthening of democracy in Nepal.

During this reporting period, the Institute: 1) invited Lord John Alderdice from the British House of Lords to meet with the leaders of all major political parties in mid-December; 2) held consultations and meetings with political party leaders, media (print and electronic) houses, civil society organizations, and international organizations to garner support and cooperation for political party development programs; 3) coordinated a radio talk show on the political situation in Nepal; 4) designed a training curriculum and materials for training-of-trainers (TOT) workshops for leadership development training; 5) formed an advisory board of reform-minded leaders to implement political party development programs; 6) formed an advisory board of women's wing members to continue ongoing women's political participation program; and 7) coordinated with associations of journalists to hold a journalist workshop to support democratic values.

## **II. BACKGROUND**

February 1, 2005, saw a dramatic change in Nepal's political environment, as democracy was revoked, constitutional rights suspended, a state of emergency declared, censorship of the press instituted, and direct Royal rule established in Nepal for a three-year period, as described by the King in his Royal Proclamation. The King's takeover of Nepal's government was the outgrowth of years of failed democratic government and a growing Maoist insurgency.

Since 1991, conflicts within and among political parties have made it difficult to maintain governing coalitions in Nepal, which has resulted in a rapid succession of 13 prime ministers, four in 1998 and 1999 alone. This instability is both a contributing factor to, and exacerbated by, continued economic hardship and the "People's War," launched in northwestern and western Nepal in 1996 by the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist. The civil war has now spread to virtually all of the nation's districts. Between March and October 2002, parliament and elected local government bodies were dissolved and the King dismissed the cabinet. At present, except for the speaker and deputy speaker of the Parliament<sup>1</sup>, there are no elected officials in Nepal.

Relations between the political parties and King Gyanendra have steadily deteriorated since his coronation in 2001, particularly since the then-elected Prime Minister and his cabinet were dismissed on October 4, 2002. After this event, the major parliamentary parties were unable to agree on a consensus choice for prime minister when presented with the opportunity.

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<sup>1</sup> As mandated by Article 51 of the 1992 Constitution, the Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the House continue in their posts until a date has been set for filing of nominations for elections to the House of Representatives.

This political impasse opened the way for increasing royal authority, culminating in the February 1 declaration of a State of Emergency.

While the King has stated he is operating with a three-year mandate, it is unknown how long the current situation of royal rule can continue. Recent nationwide polling and focus groups sponsored by NDI and funded by USAID have shown that, while there is disappointment with political parties' performance, there is a deep reservoir of support for elected multi-party democracy and little desire to return to any sort of absolute monarchy. This suggests that the King's government may have to demonstrate positive results quickly to maintain public approval. Much will depend on how his government can address the growing Maoist threat, how the international community responds to the situation, and whether political parties can reform themselves, recapture the public trust, and unify to forge a common approach to restoring democracy in Nepal.

### III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

#### *Lord John Alderdice's Visit to Nepal*

NDI invited Lord John Alderdice, a member of Great Britain's House of Lords and former speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly, to visit Nepal in mid-December 2004. Lord Alderdice, who also served as one of the instrumental movers of the Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland, met with the top leaders of the major political parties and civil society organizations to assist them in building consensus on the political crisis in Nepal, and to provide practical examples and recommendations on how parties in other countries have reached consensus on contentious issues in politically difficult times. Lord Alderdice met with the following political party leaders and civil society organizations:

<b>Political Parties</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Honorable Girija Prasad Koirala, President, Nepali Congress (NC);</li><li>• Rt. Honorable Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and President of Nepali Congress-Democratic (NC-D)</li><li>• Honorable Minister Badri Prasad Mandal, Minister for Forest and Soil Conservation and President of Nepal Sadbhawana Party (NSP);</li><li>• Mr. Madhav Kumar Nepal, General Secretary, Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML);</li><li>• Mr. Pashupati Shamsher JB Rana, President, Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP);</li></ul>
<b>Diplomatic Community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• His Excellency James F Moriarty, US Ambassador at American Embassy; and</li><li>• His Excellency Keith Bloomfield, Ambassador, British Embassy.</li></ul>
<b>Civil Society Organizations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pro Public (Forum for Protection of Public Interest);</li><li>• SCOPE (Society for Constitutional and Parliamentary Exercises);</li><li>• HURON (Human Rights Organization of Nepal);</li><li>• INSEC (Informal Sector Service Center); and</li><li>• Ganesh Man Sing Academy.</li></ul>

#### *Consultations with Political Parties*

During this quarter, NDI met with leaders of all the major political parties to discuss their participation in political party academies designed to develop the leadership skills of reform-

minded leaders. Through these leadership academies, leaders will be given the skills to assist with building intra-party democracy and reform. Political party members consulted included: Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat, Laxman Ghimire, and K. B. Gurung of the NC; Dr. Minendra Rizal and Sagar Shamsher Rana of the NC-D; Bhim Rawal and Jhalanath Khanal from the CPN-UML; and Roshan Karki, Dhurba Bahadur Pradhan, and Uttam Rai from the RPP. NDI also delivered formal letters to all the major parties highlighting upcoming program activities and seeking their continued cooperation and participation.

#### *Consultations with Media (Print and Electronic)*

NDI met with editors and managers of Kantipur Publication and representatives of Nepal Television to discuss the possibility of working together to produce and sponsor television and radio shows and newspaper columns on political party reform activities. Given the current censorship of the media, NDI will proceed cautiously with these activities.

#### *Consultations with Civil Society Organizations*

NDI met with the Society for Constitutional and Parliamentary Exercises (SCOPE), Forum for Protection of Public Interest (Pro Public) and Human Rights Organization of Nepal (HURON) to establish a Civil Society Organizations network to work for political party reform activities and democratic development. All organizations gave their verbal approval to participate.

#### *Coordinating a Talk Show on Kantipur FM*

On January 29, 2005, NDI brought together representatives of political parties and political scientist Professor Krishna Khanal on the talk show "Samay" on Kantipur FM to discuss the findings of the NDI's recent nationwide polls. The objective of the talk show was to lay the groundwork for the political party reform activities through media. Issues discussed included party reform, internal party democracy, and consensus-building.

#### *Preparing a Training Curriculum and Materials for Training of Trainers (TOT) Workshop for Leadership Training*

NDI is currently working in close consultation with political party leaders to design a training curriculum and identify international trainers and facilitators for the training-of-trainers (TOT) workshop proposed under the leadership training component of NDI's program. The Institute has revised the training materials (principles and techniques for political party strengthening) that have been used for leadership development training in other countries, including South Asian countries. The materials have been sent out for translation into Nepali.

#### *Forming an Advisory Committee*

NDI held a meeting with the leaders of five major political parties on March 3, 2005, to discuss future programming and develop a joint statement. NDI is planning to facilitate the preparation of a multi-party statement on party reform, democratic accomplishments and

responding to citizen's concerns. During this meeting, NDI formed an advisory committee of the political parties to implement and over see program activities and to act as a liaison with their respective parties. This advisory committee includes: Mr. Ram Sharan Mahat, Central Committee Member, NC; Mr. Bhim Rawal, Central Committee Member, CPN-UML; Mr. Sagar Shamsher Rana, Central Committee Member, NC-D; Mr. Dhurba Bahadur Pradhan, Deputy General Secretary, RPP; and Mr. Anil Jha, Central Committee Member, NSP-Anandi Devi. Currently, NDI is in the process of drafting a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between NDI and the political parties to implement leadership development academies.

#### *Preparing for Women's Advocacy Workshop*

NDI held a meeting with women leaders of seven political parties on March 4, 2005, to form an advisory board of women's wing members to continue ongoing women's political participation program. Advisory board members will include:

- Hon. Chitralekha Yadav, Deputy Speaker, House of Representative and Central Committee Member, Nepali Congress-Democratic
- Ms. Sahana Pradhan, Central Committee Member, CPN-UML
- Ms. Pushpa Bhusal, Member, Nepali Congress
- Ms. Roshan Karki, Spokesperson, Rastriya Prajatantra Party
- Ms. Sarita Giri, Central Committee Member, Nepal Sadbhawana Party-Anandi Devi
- Ms. Sashi Shrestha, Central Committee Member, People's Front Nepal
- Ms. Neelam Verma, President, Women's Wing, Nepal Sadbhawana Party

NDI is currently preparing to hold a workshop from May 16 to 18, 2005, to train women party members on strategies for implementing the Global Action Plan, a charter of best practices for increasing the role of women in political parties developed at NDI's "Win With Women" conference in December 2003. NDI has invited Cambodia's Former Minister of Women and Veteran Affairs, Mu Sochua, to facilitate this workshop. Sochua was among the working group of women leaders from 27 countries who drafted the Institute's Global Action Plan, and will assist workshop participants to develop techniques for advancing women in political parties in Nepal.

#### *NDI Asia Director Peter Manikas' Visit to Nepal*

NDI Asia Regional Director Peter Manikas visited Nepal from February 10 to 19, 2005. During his visit he met with political party leaders, representatives of the diplomatic missions including the US Ambassador and government officials, representatives of civil society, human rights activists, and journalists to get first hand information of political situation in Nepal. In addition, NDI/Nepal took the opportunity to discuss program strategies under the current political environment and develop upcoming programming ideas.

#### **PROGRAM TRAVEL**

During this quarter, the following individuals traveled for program implementation purposes:

<b>Traveler</b>	<b>Point of Origin</b>	<b>Destination</b>	<b>Dates</b>
Lord John Alderdice, Political Party Expert	Belfast, Ireland	Kathmandu	December 13 -17, 2004
Peter Manikas, NDI Regional Director	Washington, DC	Kathmandu	February 10 - 18, 2005
Terry Hoverter, NDI Senior Program Manager	Washington, DC	Kathmandu	February 11 – 20, 2005 March 14 - April 8, 2005

#### **IV. RESULTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

*Objective 1: To support political parties' efforts to restore representative democracy;*

- Following meetings with NDI, representatives from the five major political parties agreed to participate in drafting a multi-party joint statement on commitments for party reform, a plan for the future, and a summary of benefits of multi-party democracy.

*Objective 2: To support the democratization of internal party governing structures and processes to encourage participatory;*

- All five major political parties agreed to participate and implement leadership development training programs, an important first step toward building parties' internal capacity to support and train leaders. Political party representatives also assisted in identifying and selecting a training curriculum and materials for training-of-trainers (TOT) workshop. This engagement is a key component of ensuring long-term party support for the project.

*Objective 3: To support civil society efforts to asses, advocate, monitor, and report on the political and electoral reform processes.*

- No results to report this quarter.

#### **V. EVALUATION**

During this reporting period, NDI encountered several obstacles for implementing the proposed political party development program, due primarily to the unstable political environment. The political developments after the February 1 royal takeover slowed down many of the Institute's program activities, especially because a significant number of political party representatives and political activists were imprisoned or placed under house arrest. However, though these events stalled the Institute's efforts to launch activities, the down time also afforded NDI the opportunity to engage in strategic planning and preparations for next quarter's activities. NDI has continued to work with the political parties and civil society organizations to garner support and coordination for the program, and is taking important steps to engage political party and civil society representatives in all aspects of the program development process. Next quarter's activities are expected to be significantly expanded.

## **VI. FUTURE ACTIVITIES**

In the coming quarter, the Institute will develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the major political parties to implement leadership development training, finalize a training curriculum and materials for training-of-trainers (TOT) workshop, identify and finalize master trainers (organizers/administrators) for the TOTs, and hold an intensive 10-day training-of-trainers (TOT) workshop for 25 master trainers in Kathmandu. NDI will also hold a workshop for journalists on supporting democratic values through reporting in early May. The Institute will work in close coordination with Federation of Nepalese Journalists (FNJ), Himal Media and other associations of journalists to plan and conduct this event. NDI is currently identifying an international expert to facilitate the workshop.

In mid-May, NDI will hold its advocacy workshop for politically-active women in order to help them develop strategy and tactics for increasing the participation of women in leadership and in elected office within their respective political parties. In addition, under proposed consensus-building and political party reform activities, NDI will hold breakfast meetings with representatives of diplomatic mission and political party leaders to share opinions between the diplomatic missions and political party leaders on the changed political situation. NDI will also assist all the major political parties in drafting of a joint statement on party reform, democratic accomplishments after 1990, and plans to serve the citizens of Nepal. Commitments for reform, a plan for the future, and a summary of the benefits of multi-party democracy will be combined in a joint multi-party statement. Additionally, NDI will invite Lord John Alderdice to return to Nepal to work with all the major political parties to design an agenda for political consensus building, and hold a national roundtable where parties can develop concrete recommendations for reaching a consensus on issues of political significance.