



**Final Report**  
**CROATIA: POLITICAL PARTY, LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PARLIAMENTARY**  
**DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**  
**USAID Cooperative Agreement No. 160-A-00-02-00100-00**  
**May 1, 2002 to October 31, 2004**

**I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In 2002, despite significant advancements in its democratic development, Croatia still faced many challenges. Political parties lacked strong communication mechanisms between their headquarters, government ministers, parliamentary caucuses and field offices and decision-making was centralized at the top echelons of party structures, leaving rank-and-file members generally underrepresented in policy formation. While parties had begun to use direct voter contact techniques, they were not utilizing available technology to target voters and recruit volunteers. In many parties, the role of women and youth was still marginalized. Croatia's parliament, the *Sabor*, faced many challenges, including the following: a lack of strong management and properly trained staff; the inability to use technology efficiently; a lack of issue-based research and input from experts and key stakeholders on pending legislation; and caucuses that were not adequately engaged in the parliamentary process.

As a result, from 2002 to 2004, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) conducted a program in Croatia to support the consolidation of democracy by assisting parliament and political parties to reach out to constituencies, to incorporate citizen input into the legislative process, and to build institutional capacity to make the political system more open, representative and participatory. NDI's specific objectives were the following:

- Targeted political party caucuses and elected representatives establish mechanisms for communication among their elected officials, party members and voters.
- Select political parties develop and use tools, such as information technology, to identify and contact potential voters, members and volunteers.
- Targeted political party branches develop cooperative programs across county and regional boundaries.
- The participation of women and youth as members in and representatives of political parties is increased.
- Targeted political parties develop an outreach strategy in advance of the parliamentary elections that utilizes their respective party structures – ministers, elected officials and party headquarters – and articulates their achievements to party activists within party branches.

- Targeted party branches conduct outreach activities that include party activists and elected and government officials.
- Targeted committees develop policies incorporating citizen input.
- Parliamentary caucuses participate more fully in the parliamentary process.
- The internal management and functioning of parliament is strengthened.
- The skill and knowledge capacity of parliamentary staff is strengthened such that their ability to provide independent research services to MPs, committees and caucuses is strengthened.

This work built on the Institute's previous programs in Croatia, which began in 1995 and improved the organizational development and campaign skills of what were then only nascent political parties; strengthened the internal management of the *Sabor*, a weak body under communism that had atrophied further under the authoritarian rule of Franjo Tudjman; and helped found GONG, a widely respected domestic election monitoring group that was instrumental during the watershed 2000 parliamentary elections.

During the course of NDI's tenure in Croatia, the country has made great strides in its democratic consolidation, as is evidenced by the European Union's decision to grant it official candidate status in 2004. The framework for an open, representative and participatory democratic political system now exists. The political party system has evolved into an established, if crowded, field of parties on the right, left and center, with consensus on the country's geopolitical orientation. The 2003 parliamentary elections, resulting in the return of the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) to government, were the second consecutive peaceful transfer of power, further cementing Croatia's democratic development. The *Sabor* is increasingly able to fill the broadened role it acquired through constitutional reform in 2000, although it is still in need of further democratic development in the areas of constituent outreach, oversight of the executive, and staff development.

Having aided political parties under previous programs to build basic organizational structures and campaign skills, NDI focused its efforts during this program on strengthening political party internal communications, improving the coordination between party headquarters and branches, and encouraging parties to increase outreach to party activists and voters. Through its parliamentary program, NDI assisted caucuses in strengthening their influence by coordinating the actions of their member of parliament (MPs), trained parliamentary staff on how to provide research and relevant information to MPs, and helped parliamentary committees incorporate public input into legislation. NDI also continued to support GONG to further strengthen its internal operations and conduct program activities to link elected officials with citizens.

Major program components included the following:

*Political Party Development:* The Institute provided training and technical assistance to nine parties<sup>1</sup> through training and technical assistance on long-term strategic planning, message

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout the grant, NDI worked with the following political parties : the Social Democratic Party (SDP); the Croatian Peasants' Party (HSS); the Croatian Peoples' Party (HNS); the Liberal Party (LS); *Libra*; the Istrian Democratic Party (IDS); the Croatian Social Liberal Party (HSLs) [NDI ended assistance to HSLs in 2003];the

development, internal party communications, branch office development, election planning and organization, direct voter contact, and increased membership participation in party policy development. Through training sessions on these issues, as well as direct work with the women and youth forums of political parties, NDI also stressed the importance of increasing the role of women and young people in the political process.

*Parliamentary Development:* Building on its work from 2000 to 2002, the Institute continued to work to strengthen the institution of parliament. During this grant period, NDI trained more than 80 *Sabor* staff and MPs on basic and advanced computer skills to help them improve legislative research and assisted the parliamentary leadership in better utilizing technology. The Institute helped parliamentary caucuses increase their role in parliament through creating strategic plans and improving communication structures both among MPs and with party headquarters. Through a study mission to the Washington State Legislature for MPs and staff, the Institute helped lay the groundwork for the use of public hearings by committees to solicit citizen input into legislation and conduct government oversight.

*Support to GONG:* NDI provided GONG with a subgrant to support a portion of its organizational and program costs. In addition to this financial assistance, NDI also provided limited technical assistance on further strengthening its internal management through workshops and consultations. NDI's technical assistance to GONG decreased in this grant period, compared to previous years, as a result of the increased capacity of the organization.

NDI's contribution to Croatia's democratic development can be seen in many places, as noted below:

- Political parties currently function as parties should in a democracy. They contest elections using sophisticated techniques and technology, such as get-out-the-vote software to target voters and campaign material directed at specific demographics. They form governing and opposition coalitions, represent constituents in elected office, devise and articulate legislative agendas, and have begun to oversee the activities of government. Internally, party headquarters and branch operations are stronger and better coordinated; women and youth are better able to develop their political careers and have gained greater respect from political leaders; and at least one party has started its own training institute to replicate NDI's training.
- Parliamentary staff have improved their services to MPs, including providing more legislative research for MPs, committees and caucuses and orienting new members of parliament. Caucuses are reaching out to constituents, creating strategic plans, and better coordinating the activities MPs to provide a united message and operate more efficiently. Stemming from a NDI study trip to the Washington state assembly, MPs and staff are drafting rules of procedure for public committee hearings.
- GONG has become a premier advocate for democratic practices in Croatia and a recognized authority on non-partisan election monitoring and government-citizen dialogue across the region.

A set core principles guided NDI's work in Croatia, including building relationships on the institutional rather than personal level, treating parties and parliamentary staff as equal partners, and clearly defining roles and expectations. These principles are detailed in the evaluation section of this proposal.

## **II. BACKGROUND**

### **Political Party Program**

January 2005 marks four years since the democratic opposition to former President Franjo Tudjman won breakthrough elections and set Croatia firmly on a path toward democratic rule and Euroatlantic integration. Tudjman's Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) had ruled the country since independence in 1991, presiding over a semi-authoritarian dictatorship that retarded the growth of democratic political institutions. Since 2000, Croatia has made great strides in its democratic development—evidenced by the European Union's decision to grant the country "Official Candidate" status in May 2003 and by Croatia's membership in NATO's Partnership for Peace program.

However, when NDI began programming under this grant in 2002, Croatia still faced hurdles to its democratic development. Party field offices, while having strengthened their organization and management, did not have strong communication mechanisms connecting them with party headquarters, nearby districts and local officials. Party decision-making was centralized at the top echelons of party structures with little or no opportunity for rank-and-file members and local party leaders to share their views with party leadership, leading to member disillusion with the parties. Coordination with and training for the local councilors elected in the May 2001 local elections was particularly weak. Likewise, party headquarters, party caucuses and government ministers often worked in isolation of each other. While parties had begun to use direct voter contact techniques, they were not utilizing available technology to target voters and recruit volunteers.

An additional challenge was that the governing coalition led by the Social Democratic Party (SDP)<sup>2</sup> was plagued by internal turmoil. The coalition, which represented all ends of the ideological spectrum and was brought together by a common desire to see the nationalist HDZ removed from power, was unable to agree on many policy issues ranging from economic reform to cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia (ICTY). This infighting began to hurt the coalition's standing with the public. In 2002, the SDP and its coalition partners' approval ratings began to fall, while the popularity of the HDZ began to rise. It became increasingly apparent that one of the biggest challenges to Croatia's democratic institutions was the lack of support by citizens for their parliament and political parties. Poll after poll demonstrated that the undecided or "will not vote" percentage of registered voters was between 30 and 40 percent. A key challenge for political parties and for the government was to develop strategies to talk directly to voters, to be responsive to their fears and concerns, and to demonstrate that the current political process was truly different from the past.

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<sup>2</sup> The members of the coalition were the Croatian Peasants' Party (HSS), Croatian Peoples' Party (HNS), Liberal Party (LS), and the Croatian Social Liberal Party.

In this political environment, NDI developed a program with the following objectives:

- Targeted political party caucuses and elected representatives establish mechanisms for communication among their elected officials, party members and voters.
- Select political parties develop and use tools, such as information technology, to identify and contact potential voters, members and volunteers.
- Targeted political party branches develop cooperative programs across county and regional boundaries.
- The participation of women and youth as members in and representatives of political parties is increased.
- Targeted political parties develop an outreach strategy in advance of the parliamentary elections that utilizes their respective party structures – ministers, elected officials and party headquarters – and articulates their achievements to party activists within party branches.
- Targeted party branches conduct outreach activities that include party activists and elected and government officials.

In the months leading up to the November 2003 parliamentary elections, more than 35 percent of voters remained undecided, the majority of which were women and youth. To help parties target these voters, NDI conducted focus group research to ascertain why undecided women, youth and Serbian minority voters were undecided and to try to determine what would motivate them to vote. This research highlighted another challenge facing Croatia's political parties; the need for increased participation of women and youth. The focus groups showed that voters wanted to see new faces on candidate lists, particularly women and people under 40, as well as more direct contact from political parties. NDI shared this information with all of its partner parties and advised them to encourage new, energetic politicians to become active and to increase direct voter contact through such methods as door-to-door canvassing and setting up telephone banks, many of which the parties adopted. In addition to consultations, NDI provided the parties with campaign readiness training. The Institute worked with parties to help them improve their organizational and communications structures, increase the participation of women and youth in the campaign and target voters with tools, such as get-out-the-vote software developed by NDI.

The November 2003 parliamentary election saw the HDZ defeat the SDP-led coalition and return to power. Throughout the campaign, the HDZ attempted to shed its nationalist face and present itself to the electorate as “reformed” and committed to move Croatia closer to the European Union, essentially embracing the reform agenda of the SDP-led coalition. Led by Ivo Sanader, the HDZ won 66 of the 152 seats in parliament, falling short of a majority of 76 seats. The HDZ found support for its government from small center-right parties, the Croatian Pensioners' Party (HSU) and the minority representatives. While the aforementioned agreed to support the HDZ, only the Democratic Center (DC) agreed to enter the government.

The primary challenge during the election for the SDP-led government was its inability to present a united front to voters. The SDP, HSS and the Croatian People's Party all ran separately and competed for the same voters. The HDZ, which ran on many of the same issues as the SDP—joining Europe, the return of displaced Serbs and cooperation with the International

Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia (ICTY)—left the voters confused and questioning whether a difference existed among the parties. The inability of the former governing partners to form a coalition was more detrimental than just the splitting of votes. Croatia uses the *d'hondt* system, which redistributes votes for parties that did not cross the five percent threshold proportionally to the parties that received the most votes. As the HDZ won the highest percentage of votes, it receive more of these votes than did the parties that chose to run alone, translating into 15 additional seats for the HDZ.

The election did, however, show encouraging signs. One positive aspect was that once again the process was deemed free and fair. This was the third peaceful transfer of power since Croatia's independence in 1991. The campaign also saw the collapse of nationalist rhetoric. Those parties that based their campaign on ethnic nationalism—the Croatian Bloc and the True Croatian Renaissance—failed to cross the parliamentary threshold. The transfer of governing authority has proceeded smoothly. Showing its confidence in the abilities of GONG, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) decided not to monitor the elections (although it did release a statement and report). In addition, the campaign saw the use of many modern techniques that NDI encouraged the parties to use, such as door-to-door campaigning, telephone banks, targeted campaign materials for different demographics and the use of technology, such as the GOTV software to target voters and telephone text messaging to contact citizens.

Parties have now evolved to the extent that they no longer need assistance on basic party building skills. However, further improvements should still be made, such as the increased participation of members in the development of party policy and increased cooperation between MPs and their party headquarters. Parties have begun to take steps to make these changes without external assistance. For example, in the months prior to the 2005 local elections, the SDP plans to hold a series of roundtables with the public to discuss topical local issues and has announced its intention to create a training academy to provide skills building training to its members.

### **Parliamentary Development Program**

Croatia's parliament, the *Sabor*, has struggled since 2000 to fulfill the broadened role it acquired through constitutional reform that same year. When work under this grant began in 2002, the *Sabor* faced many challenges, including the following: a lack of strong management and properly trained staff; the inability to use technology efficiently; a lack of issue-based research and input from experts and key stakeholders on pending legislation; and caucuses that were not adequately engaged in the parliamentary process.

The Institute's program was designed to address these problems. NDI's objectives were the following:

- Targeted committees develop policies incorporating citizen input.
- Parliamentary caucuses participate more fully in the parliamentary process.
- The internal management and functioning of parliament is strengthened.

- The skill and knowledge capacity of parliamentary staff is strengthened such that their ability to provide independent research services to MPs, committees and caucuses is strengthened.

Working closely with the office of the *Sabor* secretary general, NDI trained more than 80 MPs and *Sabor* staff on basic and advanced computer skills to improve their capacity to conduct legislative research. The Institute also worked with staff through consultations, workshops and study missions to help them improve the services they offer to MPs. As a result of this training, the staff developed a training manual for new MPs, and many departments increased services and advertised them to MPs so that they would be fully utilized. NDI's assistance enabled caucuses to create strategic plans, improve coordination among MPs and with the party headquarters and implement measures to increase their outreach to constituents. A study mission to the Washington State Legislature provided MPs and committee staff an opportunity to learn how public hearings are used in the legislative process and resulted in an initiative by the participants to develop rules of procedure for the use of public hearings in *Sabor* committees.

Speaker of the Sabor Vladimir Seks caused alarm in February 2004 when he noted that he had no intention of letting the opposition parties use parliament as a forum to “*indulge in discussions that do not have any other meaning than merely to present their views*” and that the Sabor was “*neither in session nor working and that is exactly how it should be.*”

Despite these advancements, the *Sabor* still faces many challenges as it works to harmonize its legislation with that of the EU. Throughout 2004, government and parliamentary leadership continually demonstrated a disturbing disregard for parliament as a democratic institution. The *Sabor*'s already under funded budget was cut by 25 percent, while the budget of the secret police was increased by more than 50 percent and that of the office of the president by 15 percent. In the fall of 2004 further troubling signs emerged when Speaker Seks pushed forward an important vote even after opposition MPs complained that there was not a quorum present, resulting in a boycott of voting by opposition parties.

### III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

#### Political Party Program

##### *Local Councilors Program*

The local elections of May 2001 resulted in the election of many new local councilors who were unfamiliar with their role and the importance of strong coordination among local party branches, party headquarters and the parliamentary caucuses. NDI began working with local councilors and party branches to address this problem in 2001 and continued its efforts during this grant. The Institute trained nine party liaisons, from six political parties (the SDP, the HSS, the HNS, the LS, the HSLs and the SDSS), responsible for coordination among various party bodies; held workshops for local councilors across Croatia; and created a *Local Councilor's Manual* to provide the councilors, local branches and liaisons with a reference guide (attached).

### *Party Coordinator Training (May 2002-June 2002)*

In an effort to strengthen both horizontal and vertical party communications, NDI conducted a series of multi-party training seminars for all party liaisons, who are responsible for coordinating the activities and information of their party's local councilors and for supporting links between the party headquarters, local branches, elected officials (both local councilors and MPs) and voters. Each party identified its own liaisons to be trained by the Institute. The training sessions focused on improving communication structures, developing effective campaign strategies, publicizing the accomplishments of the local councilors and the party, creating contact databases, developing effective party newsletters, and communicating directly with voters. As a result of the project, all of NDI's partners in this activity—the HSLs, the HSS, the SDSS, the HNS, the LS and the SDP—created databases with information on the party's local councilors and created either a new party newsletter or added a column on local councilors and their initiatives to an existing publication.

### *Local Councilor Training*

In addition to the multi-party training seminars for party liaisons, NDI held single-party workshops for local councilors from the HSS, the SDP, the HSLs, the HNS, Libra and the SDSS. The workshops focused on their role in the council, ways to address the common problems they face, and how to negotiate with other councilors. In January 2003, NDI developed the *Croatia Local Councilor's Manual* to provide basic background information to first-time elected municipal and county councilors. Topics included: the local councilor's role, how to work with the political party, types of party clubs, effective party club operations, building coalitions and the councilor's role in the budget process.

Following the conclusion of training for local councilors and party coordinators, NDI continued to consult with each party's leadership, local councilors and the coordinators themselves to help the parties continue to improve coordination.

### ***Increasing Youth Political Participation***

Young political activists in Croatia suffer from a lack of respect from party leadership and struggle to make their voice heard. As a result, many of their innovative policy ideas, outreach methods and party reform initiatives go unimplemented. This is noticed by voters, who noted in NDI-facilitated focus groups prior to the 2003 parliamentary elections, that they wanted to see more young politicians on party lists. In an effort to increase the role of youth in politics, the Institute assisted the party youth wings in developing strategic plans and improving organizational structures so that they can become more active in the party and in designing and fielding issue-based questionnaires and planning activities to attract voters in advance of the November 2003 parliamentary elections. NDI encouraged the youth wings to track the number of members and voters they recruit and to highlight this to party leadership during negotiations for greater influence and positions on party lists. The Institute also assisted the youth wings with ad hoc projects. For example, the SDP Youth Wing, opposed to some proposed changes to the party statute, approached NDI for advice on writing an amendment to introduce at the party congress. The Institute held a workshop with Jacques Monasch, former campaign manager for

the Dutch Labour Party, to help the group draft the amendment. While the amendment did not pass, the youth wing was able to increase its visibility at the annual conference. NDI recognized that it must also work with party leadership to increase youth participation. Therefore, NDI used the focus group data to highlight to party leadership the advantages of promoting youth within the party. The Institute also encouraged all parties to include youth members at training events and utilize the skills they acquired.

### ***Exposing Parties to their European Counterparts***

With European Union membership in Croatia's near future, NDI made efforts to connect Croatian parties with their counterparts in Europe. When feasible and appropriate, the Institute brought trainers from Europe to conduct training for its partner parties, particularly in the pre-election period. NDI paired trainers from the European party groups, such as the European Peoples Party and Party of European Socialists, with Croatian parties that were either members or observes of group. David Evans, former assistant secretary general of the British Labour Party and Jonathan Upton, former head of corporate development for the Labour Party worked with the SDP on multiple occasions, Meus van der Poel, campaign organizer for the Dutch Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA) and Loek Schuler, former head of the CDA youth wing, trained the HSS and Richard Pinnock of the British Liberal Democratic Party and Mary O'Hagan, former director of the Parliamentary Resource Centre for the Liberal Democratic Party in the House of Commons, worked with the HNS, the LS and Libra. This ideological connection allowed the trainers to share best practices on reaching out to their base voters, as well as training on general organization and communication methods.

The relationships with these individuals will help the Croatia parties build stronger ties with their European counterparts. For example, in 2003 NDI learned that of the three Croatian parties with observer status in the European People's Party (EPP) – the HDZ, the HSS and DC – the HDZ was the best able to promote itself for membership as a result of support from the German Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and the Austrian People's Party (OVP). From reports and conversations in the EPP circles it appeared that the HSS was seen as a party without a future due to its aging voter base. As a result, NDI invited Meus van der Poel from the CDA to meet with the HSS leadership to discuss ways to counter this image and to become more involved at the European level. Van der Poel suggested the following steps that would help the HSS gain membership status in the EPP: the HSS Youth Wing should join the Youth European People's Party (YEPP) as soon as possible, as membership in the YEPP is a good basis from which to argue for full membership in the EPP; the work of the HSS international secretary should be expanded and activities delegated within party headquarters; and the party should create a strategic plan for giving EPP member parties information about the HSS. After working extensively with the HSS, van der Poel discussed the party's merits with the CDU and other EPP members.

### ***2003 Parliamentary Election Activities***

Beginning in January 2003, NDI's political party program shifted its focus toward election assistance to prepare for the November 2003 parliamentary elections. During this phase NDI helped parties to identify methods to reach out to voters through focus group research, to

improve their communication structures, both vertically, between headquarters and field offices and horizontally between field offices, through training workshops and to increase their use of technology to target voters through the development of a get-out-the-vote (GOTV) software.

### *Focus Group Research*

In January 2003, 35 to 40 percent of voters still had not decided for whom they would vote in the November 2003 parliamentary elections. With this in mind, NDI began its focus group research to examine why voters were undecided, to ascertain how political parties could better reach out to voters and to provide an opportunity for parties to build relationships with research firms and learn how to use research data. During March, 21 focus groups of women, young people and members of the Serb national minority—the demographics shown by other polls to most likely to be undecided—were conducted by the polling firm Target in five regions throughout Croatia (Zagreb, Slavonia, Banovina, Inland Dalmatia and Coastal Dalmatia) to represent a variety of viewpoints.

The results of the focus group research indicated an increased feeling of disillusionment and frustration among undecided voters since the 2000 elections. Most felt disconnected from politics and that politicians were interested only in their own gain. Interestingly, these undecided voters indicated that they did want to vote, but that the parties were indistinguishable from each other. When asked what would motivate them to vote, participants often mentioned having direct contact with the candidates, receiving more information about the politicians, and having more women and youth on candidates' lists.

The Institute presented the results of the focus groups to the headquarters of the SDP, the HSS, the HNS, Libra, the LS, the SDSS, the HSLs, and the SNS. NDI discussed ways to communicate more effectively with citizens, emphasized the importance of direct voter contact and targeting voters and reinforced the message that Croatian citizens do want to participate in the democratic political process. NDI also stressed the research findings to party members at numerous campaign readiness workshops that were held for partner party branches throughout Croatia in the months leading to the elections.

### *Pre-Election Survey*

In October 2003, NDI partnered with Professor of Political Science Nenad Zakosek to partially fund a survey on voter attitudes in Croatia. By supporting the survey, NDI was given full access to the data, which it used to help parties analyze their election campaigns and performance. The survey was a project of the faculty of political science at the University of Zagreb. Zakosek has conducted a pre-election survey for every Croatian election since 1990. The survey provides useful information about the attitudes of voters, but Zakosek previously had been unable to reach a large audience with his findings, as politicians and parties did not realize the utility of the information.

Zakosek's detailed survey was administered to a sample of 1,200 voters in the two weeks before the elections to capture their opinions about the campaign and the political parties. The themes of the survey included political parties, social demographics, political cleavages, policy issues, authoritarianism, ethnic issues and identity, motivation to vote, and the current election

campaign. As part of post-election consultations with its partner parties, the Institute shared the results and showed parties how to use the data to reach out to voters, analyze their election performance and develop party policy.

### *GOTV Software*

To provide parties with an effective way to target voters, NDI developed a GOTV software program. The software contains a database component that allows the user to enter a voter's contact information, district and polling place, and any other specific notes the party would find useful and to code them as supportive, unsupportive or undecided. The entries can then be sorted by location—district, polling place, or more specifically to a particular street—or by their degree of support for the party. This sorting function can help parties identify whom they need to contact again, so they can most efficiently use their resources. The software was designed so that the coding is easy to change to enable parties to tailor the categories and set-up to their liking. NDI trained provided advanced training for individuals at interested party branches on how to use and adapt the software, so that they will be able to continue using it without assistance from NDI and train other interested branches. While this software was designed for GOTV activities, parties can continue to use the database to communicate their policies and successful initiatives. NDI distributed the software to many local party branches and included the presentation of GOTV software in its field-based training sessions. In the lead-up to the parliamentary elections, 13 party branches of the HNS, the HSS, the LS and Libra actively used NDI's GOTV software.

### *Observation Tour*

In accordance with NDI and USAID policy, the Institute ceased single party assistance 30 days prior to the election to avoid any claims that it favored a particular electoral outcome. During that period, however, NDI staff traveled to all electoral districts to observe party district headquarters and offices to see if they were open and what type of information they had available for voters. The Institute assessed whether parties were using direct voter contact and had a calendar of planned activities. The staff also observed campaign rallies and other events and spoke with citizens to see how much they knew about the parties and their campaigns.

NDI used the information to produce four election newsletters that related staff observations of campaign activities and party campaign materials at the district level. A newsletter was published weekly for the three weeks before the elections, and the last one was produced the day after the elections. The newsletters were distributed to Balkan analysts and interested parties in Croatia. NDI used its observations in post-election consultations with the parties to help them evaluate their performance and improve for the local elections in 2005.

### *Individual Party Assistance*

#### SDP

In the pre-election period, the SDP, one of the two largest political parties and the backbone of the ruling coalition, faced difficulties communicating the accomplishments of the

government to the voters through its local branches and through a strong national campaign due to a lack of experience running as an incumbent. Therefore, in the run-up to the parliamentary elections NDI provided assistance to the SDP on developing a party communications strategy, using governmental officials to campaign for the party, strengthening organizational structure and training headquarters staff and district campaign managers.

In November 2002, David Evans, former assistant secretary general of the British Labour Party and Jonathan Upton, former head of corporate development for the Labour Party made a presentation at the SDP internal party conference to more than 300 party officials, including Prime Minister Ivica Racan, all SDP government ministers, MPs and local elected officials. They focused on how the Labour party overcame many of the challenges the SDP was currently facing. NDI continued to bring Evans and Upton to Croatia throughout 2003 to help the SDP develop a communications strategy for the parliamentary elections that included a clear uniform message and to train the party's district campaign managers.

As a result of the presentation given by Evans and Uptons, Racan decided that the party headquarters needed to hire 15 new employees to help coordinate activities for the parliamentary elections. NDI provided multiple training sessions for the new staff to help them understand the purpose and structure of a campaign, define their roles and responsibilities and work as a team.

NDI also trained the campaign teams in all ten electoral districts on direct voter contact, targeting voters, internal party communication, and strategic planning. For offices that were uncomfortable in communicating directly with citizens, NDI led the group in a role playing exercise, and then sent the participants to the streets to test out their approach. Four SDP headquarters staff participated as trainers with NDI staff and the training became a co-production between the SDP and the Institute. The SDP headquarters team thereafter continued to train other branch offices on similar topics. Key components of the training were the discussion led by the headquarters staff on the communication structure between the field and headquarters and the importance of creating strategic plans. As a result of the training, almost all districts developed a 12-week campaign plan.

The Institute also conducted a two-day training seminar in Zagreb for all 10 district campaign managers and their deputies (20 individuals total). The seminar covered the roles and responsibilities of the managers during the campaign, the selection of other members of the campaign team, the organization of a campaign office and the management of volunteers and activists. Each district set its own campaign priorities, and the participants identified their roles within the campaign, as well as possible obstacles in the delivery of the campaign and how to adapt to them.

## HSS

The HSS, while a member of the governing coalition, decided to contest the parliamentary elections independently, rather than in a pre-election coalition as in 2000. Similar to other members of the governing coalition, the HSS identified its main campaign challenges as coordinating the operations of its headquarters, parliamentary caucus and election district campaign teams and conveying its message and accomplishments in government to voters. As a

result, in the months prior to the elections, NDI conducted workshops on communication structures for district campaign teams, trained candidates on campaigning effectively, held numerous consultations with Secretary General Stank Grcic on election strategy and trained activists from the party headquarters on reaching out to voters.

NDI traveled throughout Croatia to almost all electoral districts to provide training to the district campaign teams on the roles and functions of team members, the importance of direct voter contact and targeting voters, strategic planning, and methods of communication and office organization. In an effort to develop a relationship between the HSS and its European counterparts that would help the HSS gain full membership in the European Peoples' Party, Meus van der Poel from the Dutch Christian Democratic Appeal conducted many of the training sessions along with NDI staff. In addition to training party activists, NDI held a training-of-trainers seminar for 23 HSS regional trainers in June, so that they would be able to train their own party members prior to the elections. Participants came from county party organizations throughout Croatia, and most were either secretaries or executives of a party branch at the municipality, city or county level.

NDI held a workshop for 20 HSS candidates to prepare them for the elections. The participants were led in exercises to help them distinguish their role in the campaign, identify issues to attract voters and increase their comfort with public speaking. In addition, NDI trained 15 volunteers in the HSS national operational headquarters in Zagreb on communicating with the district offices and on how to identify and reach out to voters. While the participants were all volunteers, they held a great deal of responsibility in the daily flow of information and communication strategy between the headquarters and field.

In addition to training in the geographical electoral districts, NDI worked closely with MP Zdenka Cuhnil, the organizer of the HSS campaign for the minority representative seats. This is an electoral "district" composed of voters throughout Croatia who are registered as a member of a minority group and who choose to vote on the minority list. NDI gave Cuhnil advice on organizing a campaign team and recruiting volunteers, identifying voters, and choosing voter contact techniques to use in areas with high and low concentrations of minority voters.

## LS

Before the decision of the LS to enter a pre-election coalition with the SDP, polls indicated that the party would have trouble passing the five percent threshold in all districts. Therefore NDI focused its training on the importance of making the best use of limited resources, such as through voter targeting. NDI conducted campaign readiness workshops for campaign teams in almost all electoral districts in the months leading up to the parliamentary elections. In addition to voter targeting, the workshops focused on the importance of strong communication among the different party and campaign staff and direct voter contact. In many instances, the Institute helped the participants customize scripts for door-to-door canvassing and telephoning voters.

Richard Pinnock from the British Liberal Democrats conducted some of the training and to meet with the party leadership to help build a relationship between the two parties. In addition

to the campaign readiness workshops, Pinnock consulted with LS Vice President Andrea Feldman on fundraising, volunteer recruitment, and message development. Pinnock provided British Liberal manuals and campaign material to serve as examples.

## HNS

Similar to the HSS, the HNS was a member of the governing coalition that decided to contest the elections independently. The party identified its major challenges as promoting its accomplishments in government and coordinating operations between the headquarters and field and among electoral districts. As a result, to help the party prepare for the elections and improve its communication structures, NDI conducted a training session for 19 HNS headquarters staff in the summer of 2003. Johan Hamels, secretary general of the Flemish Green Party and former NDI political party program director, returned to Croatia to conduct the training along with Richard Pinnock of the British Liberal Democrats. They focused on message development, recruitment and retention of volunteers, communications between the headquarters and field, voter identification, organization of a campaign office in the field, and media relations. Pinnock used his expertise and understanding of liberal parties in another training for the HNS' campaign team in district nine on the Dalmatian coast. The training focused on improving the flow of information between the national and district headquarters, and horizontally between other electoral districts. Pinnock shared many examples from his party on how to communicate effectively with voters.

NDI also held campaign readiness workshops for the HNS in six of the ten electoral districts (Zadar, Varazdin, Osijek, Velika Gorica, Slavonski Brod, Rijeka) throughout Croatia, that HNS identified as priority areas. The workshops focused on direct voter contact, office organization and campaign strategy. NDI also provided specialized assistance relevant to the particular district.

Additionally, NDI worked with youth and female party members to help increase their role in the party. NDI assisted the Youth Council in developing a questionnaire to use as a political organizing tool, and conducted a workshop for women to help them develop strategic plans aimed at getting their names on the party's candidate list.

## Libra

As Libra is a relatively new party since its split from the HSLS after the 2000 parliamentary elections, it suffered from a lack of strong regional branches and adequate number of volunteers. Therefore, NDI focused its pre-election assistance on providing ideas on membership and volunteers recruitment and the organization of district campaign teams and stressed the importance of targeting voters. NDI traveled to five



Libra party activists campaigning door-to-door.

Libra branches throughout Croatia to provide training to more than 75 party activists and district campaign staff, and held numerous consultations on election strategy with President and Chair of the Libra Parliamentary Caucus Jozo Rados and other members of the party's leadership.

### IDS

As a small regional party, IDS did not require as much assistance on communication between headquarters and party offices as other parties. As a result, NDI worked more closely with the IDS' newly elected secretariat on strengthening that body. NDI held workshops and consultations with the seven secretariat members to analyze the party's strengths and weaknesses, and developed an action plan for improvement based on the results.

### SDSS

Before the 2003 parliamentary elections, the SDSS was not a parliamentary party. The party had strong youth members, but it was not fully utilizing them. Therefore, the Institute focused its efforts with the SDSS on activating the youth organization and strengthening its position within the party. To this aim, NDI conducted a workshop for 19 youth members from across the country on taking initiative in the campaign, targeting voters, and creating strong communication structures between the headquarters and field offices. NDI also met with youth activists and the party leadership to help them coordinate their work.

Through these consultations and workshops, NDI noticed that the SDSS did not have a webpage, so the Institute worked with party members to develop a site. The Institute helped the party select content that presented the SDSS' views on topical issues and the ways to become active within the party. The site, which was completed before the elections, can be seen at [www.sdss.hr](http://www.sdss.hr).

### Serb National Party (SNS)

One of the most significant challenges the SNS faced prior to the parliamentary elections was determining its election strategy. In the year leading up to the elections, NDI held multiple consultations with the SNS leadership to discuss its election strategy, particularly regarding whether the party should run alone, in coalition with Croatian mainstream parties or not at all. NDI advised the party leadership that it should approach party members seeking their input before making a decision. Once the SNS did this and decided to run in the election, NDI held a workshop for 16 municipal, city and county councilors to help them articulate clear solutions to the problems faced by the Serb minority and to develop arguments for why minority voters should vote on the minority lists and for the SNS.

### ***Internal Party Policy Development***

With decision-making centralized at the top echelons of party structures, rank-and-file members are generally underrepresented in policy formulation. Public opinion holds that politics is personality-based and not sufficiently grounded in legislation. With this in mind, NDI conducted many activities such as study trips to British party conferences, and consultations and

training sessions for the HSS, the LS, and Libra, to help parties develop mechanisms to increase the participation of members in the policy development process.

### *Study Trips to the British Labour and Liberal Democrat Party Conferences*

In March 2004, NDI and World Learning sent two delegations of political party activists to the British Labour Spring Conference<sup>3</sup> and the Liberal Democratic<sup>4</sup> Spring Federal Conference. Participants were selected based on their willingness and ability to advocate for and pursue an opening of the policy development process. The trips exposed participants to the proceedings of party conventions in a Western democracy so that they could later share their experiences with their parties in Croatia and make recommendations for reforming internal party decisionmaking structures to incorporate more member participation. The trip allowed the participants to see first-hand the techniques and methods they learned in previous NDI training sessions on membership participation in party decision-making. Following both trips, a joint debriefing was held so that participants could share their varied experiences and exchange materials.

*"We have seen and participated in several different activities: plenary sessions; workshops; seminars, trainings; Q&A sessions; "big conversations"; and the "Labour Academy". They are all applicable to our context too, without requiring many financial resources. All we need is a bit of good will, and changes in the party to differentiate party management from the political part of the party."*  
--Marija Lugaric

### *Individual Party Workshops and Consultations (January 2004-March 2004)*

In addition to organizing the study trip, NDI held consultations and workshops with many political parties to discuss ways they could open the policy development process to party members. NDI worked closely with LS President Ivo Banac, for example, to help the party prepare for and carry out a tour of party branches aimed at opening the party's policy development process to members and reviewing the party's parliamentary election results. NDI also assisted the Sisak county HSS branch to incorporate its local councilors into the policy development process and held a policy development training session for the leadership of Libra, including all former ministers, the party president, general-secretary, and party youth organization leadership.

### *Increasing the Political Participation of Women*

Political parties in Croatia have few women in leadership positions, which according to NDI's pre-election focus groups, has a negative effect on swing voters. In an effort to increase the political participation of women, the Institute encouraged all parties to send its female members to NDI training sessions and workshops. If branches failed to invite women to participate, NDI limited its interaction with those branches. While participation varied from party to party, most parties made an effort to include their female members.

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3 The participants were MP Marija Lugaric; Arsen Bauk, member of the main SDP board and president of the party's youth organization; Vesna Perak, secretary of the Split city and county organizations; and Ozren Gruicic, secretary of the SDP Rijeka city organization, and member of the Rijeka City Council.

4 The participants were Emil Soldatic, secretary general of the Istrian Democratic Assembly; Andrea Feldman, vice-president of the Liberal Party; Hrvoje Šimac, international secretary of the Libra youth club; and Sonja König, president of the HNS youth organization.

NDI held numerous training sessions for the women's organizations of the SDP, the HNS, and the HSS. While topics varied according to the needs of the organizations, popular ones included how to increase the position of the organization within the party, how to get more women on party candidate lists, and how reach out to female voters. NDI worked with the SDP Women's Forum to develop a public outreach campaign in advance of the 2003 parliamentary elections based on a party achievement, specifically, the SDP-led initiative that grants subsidies to businesses employing women over 45 years of age. Few participants were aware of this initiative, and they enthusiastically developed a strategic plan to communicate it to party members and voters. The Institute also conducted workshops with the women of the SDSS, who do not have an official women's group. These events were often the first time female members of the SDSS from different cities met each other.

In Washington, D.C. on December 9 and 10, with funding from the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), NDI hosted a global forum entitled *Win with Women: Strengthen Political Parties*, which was attended by SDP Public Relations Secretary Karolina Leakovic. The participants were a select group of established global women political party leaders who explored the role that political parties can play in encouraging women's leadership in democratic politics and in allowing women to be effective advocates for political change. As an end product, the participants finalized a plan of action to promote political party reforms for advancing women's leadership. Such a blueprint will benefit both women and political parties, which stand to gain from a more inclusive organization with wider appeal. Since the forum, Leakovic has worked to increase the role of women in the SDP through such activities as organizing a room on the work and achievements of the Women's Forum at the annual party convention.

### ***Party Toolkits***

In preparation for the close-out of NDI's program in Croatia, the Institute helped the SDP complete a toolkit for party members. The purpose of the toolkit was to leave the party with a customized set of documents, forms, and templates that it can use to further strengthen its organization and outreach. Many of the documents were adapted from training material NDI developed in its nine years in Croatia, and some were party specific documents, such as frequently asked questions and answers about the parties' statutes and information on the parties' platforms and ideologies. The party took the project seriously, preparing or adapting a majority of the included material and eventually getting approval from Party President and former Prime Minister Ivica Racan. NDI offered to help its other partner parties develop toolkits, but due to timing or a belief that they already had the materials they needed, the other parties did not accept NDI's offer for assistance.

## **PARLIAMENTARY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**

### ***Assistance to Sabor Staff***

#### *Assistance to the Office of the Secretary General of the Sabor (May 2002-September 2004)*

NDI built strong relationships with the Office of the Secretary General of the parliament. Danica Orcic was the secretary general until the parliamentary elections and was replaced by Josip Sesar in December 2003. The Institute held regular consultations with Orcic, Sesar and

their staff to coordinate activities; such as computer training, study missions, an orientation program for new MPs, the creation of a computer training room, and the development of public information materials. In addition, NDI worked with the secretaries-general to help them create parliamentary staff development plans and to strengthen the operational structure of the parliament.

*Orientation for New Members of Parliament (July 2003-January 2004)*

While MPs changes with each election, the majority of the parliamentary staff is non-partisan and therefore serves as the *Sabor's* institutional memory. In the run-up to the November 2003 parliamentary elections, NDI worked with a group of senior *Sabor* staff and Secretary General Danica Orcic to plan an orientation program and guide for the new MPs to familiar them with the rules regulations and responsibilities of the parliament. NDI helped the staff develop a questionnaire for current MPs on what information they wished had been presented to them at the beginning of their mandate. The questionnaire was fielded shortly before parliament adjourned for the election. NDI Senior Consultant for Governance Programs Stan Bach and Assistant Secretary General of the Dutch Parliament Piet van Rijn traveled to Croatia to advise the staff on preparing the orientation.

Due to the *Sabor's* schedule and the appointment of a new secretary general, the staff was not able to conduct an orientation session, but with the help of NDI, it created a *Guide for MPs*. Once completed, the manual was given to all MPs, and it received positive media coverage. The pocket-size guide contained information, such as the following: the rights and responsibilities of MPs, explained through different articles of the Rules of Procedure; an MP's right to information, including all cabinet documents; frequently asked questions, with detailed answers; and practical information for MPs, such as salary and allowable expenses. As a result of the guide, new MPs were able to better understand the parliamentary proceedings and began to participate in parliamentary sessions with confidence.

*Assistance to the Sabor Library and Information-Documentation Center and Public Relations Office (May 2002 to September 2004)*

NDI worked routinely with the *Sabor's* Library, Documentation Center and Public Relations Office to improve their services to MPs and the public. In addition to providing consultations on organizational and staffing structures, NDI worked with the departments to improve their informational materials. In April 2003, NDI began working with the Information-Documentation Center and the Public Relations Office to develop public information materials for the 6,000 citizens that visit the *Sabor* each year. A brochure containing practical information about the work of the *Sabor* and MPs, designed primarily for students, was completed in August 2003 and is currently available to visitors. The brochure was so successful that by the spring of 2004 all copies were used, and it was reprinted. In the spring of 2004, the Institute helped the *Sabor* library develop a *Guide Through the Sabor Library*. The final product, which was printed in June 2004 with assistance from NDI, contains general information about the library and its resources. It includes descriptions of the library's topical sections, describes the services the library offers to MPs and gives specific information about its lending policy, working hours, and staff contact information. The *Guide* was distributed to MPs in an effort to increase the usage of

the library by showing the variety of services and resources offered. Previously this information was not advertised.

#### *Staff Development Study Missions (June 2002-June 2004)*

NDI conducted two study missions to expose senior *Sabor* staff to the role of non-partisan employees in other legislatures and use the methods and techniques they observed to improve staff services of the Croatian parliament. In June 2002, with funds from the Canadian Embassy in Zagreb, NDI conducted a study mission for seven senior *Sabor* staff members to the Canadian parliament<sup>5</sup>. The trip exposed the group to the workings of the parliament as a whole, with special emphasis on public relations and public information, research and documentation of the parliament's activities, and administration of parliament. In June 2004, with funding from World Learning, the Institute conducted a study mission to the Washington State legislature to examine the role of public hearings in the legislative process. The Institute selected Washington State as the location for three reasons: the legislature in Washington State is one of the most open to public participation in the country; the legislature deals with issues that are pertinent in Croatia, such as fishing and coastal tourism; and Speaker of the House Frank Chopp is interested in forming ties between the Washington Legislature and the Croatian Parliament due to his Croatian heritage and the realization that the two legislatures address many similar issues. Four committee staff members and the assistant secretary general attended the trip, as well as six MPs. The mission showed the staff participants the role they can play in helping to develop a process for public hearings in the *Sabor*.

#### *Facilitation of a Relationship Between the Dutch and Croatian Parliaments (December 2003 to September 2004)*

NDI also facilitated the creation of a relationship between the Croatian and Dutch parliaments, so that the Dutch could continue to help strengthen the *Sabor* once NDI's program closed. From 2003 to 2004, NDI arranged multiple visits from Assistant Secretary General of the Dutch Parliament Piet van Rijn and other senior Dutch staff to discuss the needs of the *Sabor*, particularly in the area of EU accession, and to provide training to the staff. In addition to meeting Secretary General Sesar, van Rijn met with a group of 12 senior parliamentary staff members to discuss such issues as the recruitment and selection of staff, professional development opportunities, the organization of staff services and the legal status of parliamentary staff in the Netherlands in comparison with other civil servants.

In October 2004, as NDI's final training event with the parliament, three staff members from the Dutch parliament— Secretary of the European Affairs Committee and Head of a Committee Support Team Christianne Mattijssen, Head of the Bureau for Research and Verification Steven Oostlander and Advisor of the Personnel and Organization Department

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<sup>5</sup> The participants were: Zdravka Cufer Saric, Chief of Staff of the Deputy Speaker of the Sabor and Secretary of the Committee for Internal Policy and National Security; Sandra Muzek, Secretary of the Committee for Elections, Appointments and Administrative Affairs; Ina Kralj, PR Service in the Office of the Speaker of the Sabor; Daniela Sraga, Director of the Sabor Information-Documentation Service; Nevenka Vukovojac, Assistant in the Sabor Information-Documentation Service; Biserka Pejcić, Service for Session Preparation; and Ivna Bajšić, GONG Parliamentary Program Coordinator.

Yolande Couwenberg—conducted a workshop for 38 *Sabor* staff members. The group included a staff member from almost every committee and department, as well as from many party caucuses. The workshop covered the structure and practices of the Dutch parliament in an effort to help the *Sabor* staff further improve their work and prepare for European Union membership. Topics included staff structure, services that staff should and should not provide for MPs, the independence of the legislature from the government, the role of committees and party caucuses, public outreach, and the structure of the research services department.

### ***Computer Assistance and Training***

#### *Individual Training to Members of Parliament (MPs) and Sabor Staff*

Beginning in 2003, NDI provided both basic and advanced computer training to more than 25 interested MPs from the HSS, the HDZ, LIBRA, and the SDP caucuses. The purpose of the training was to improve the MPs ability to conduct internet research on topics being debated by the legislature, and use word processing to make the work of their caucuses and committees more efficient. Due to the strong interest of the SDP caucus in particular, NDI worked extensively with the group, providing 11 different training sessions for 11 SDP MPs. The sessions lasted between one and two hours, covering a variety of information technology (IT) topics, including basic Internet and MS Word, file management, advanced searches, computer maintenance, keyboard shortcuts and internet reseach. Based on the success of these sessions, others were organized for various party leaders.



A parliamentary staffer receives her certificate for completing NDI's computer training program.

NDI also organized a series of two-day computer-training seminars for more than 100 Croatian parliamentary staff to help them use internet research and word processing to improve the services they provide to MPs. During each seminar, the Institute covered basic internet, email and work processing skills. NDI additionally produced a short and clear step-by-step parliamentary computer-training manual on the basics of computer usage, and a second in early 2004 that provides more extensive information on Internet and E-mail usage. Approximately 155 copies of the manual completed in the beginning of 2004, were distributed to MPs, *Sabor* staff, and to the *Sabor* Library for reference purposes. The manuals provide a lasting resource that MPs and staff can use as they continue to increase their computer usage.

#### *Creation of an IT Room*

When NDI began its parliamentary program, the *Sabor* did not have a computer room that staff could access for word processing or internet research. As a result, NDI worked with the *Sabor* leadership to designate a space for computer usage and IT training and purchased four computers for the room. The room was opened in the spring of 2003 and has experienced high usage since. NDI provided further assistance in developing two databases for the Documentation

Center and helping to the staff develop a system for maintaining the parliament's computer network.

As part of its IT assistance, NDI also helped the *Sabor* create its official website<sup>6</sup>. NDI assisted the parliament in presenting information on the site that best reached out to and informed the public of the work of the parliament. The site was launched in October 2003, and by December of that year, it had already received more than 60,000 hits. In addition to information on the activities of MPs, the website provides information on the work of committees, including their agendas and minutes; announcements of meetings of the parliamentary presidency, which has been very useful for the press and media; tabled bills; and space for individual MPs and party clubs to create their own pages with technical support provided by the parliament.

### *Assistance to Parliamentary Committees (May 2002-September 2004)*

While NDI's parliamentary program focused primarily on staff development and caucus strengthening, the Institute also provided assistance to committees, particularly on the use of public hearings to increase public participation in the legislative process, which in Croatia is very low, and provide needed government oversight. NDI consulted with multiple committee chairs and staff members on the value of hearings and public consultation and to identify the committees that were most committed to using such mechanisms. With funding from World Learning, the Institute organized a study mission to Washington State on the role of public hearings in the legislative process for six MPs<sup>7</sup> and five staff members<sup>8</sup> from the identified committees, as well as Assistant Secretary General of the *Sabor* Davor Orlovic. The Institute selected Washington State as the location for three reasons: the legislature in Washington State is one of the most open to public participation in the country; the legislature deals with issues that are pertinent in Croatia, such as fishing and coastal tourism; and Speaker of the House Frank Chopp is interested in forming ties between the Washington Legislature and the Croatian Parliament due to his Croatian heritage and the realization that the two legislatures address many similar issues.



*Study Mission Participants with Speaker of the Washington State House of Representatives Frank Chopp*

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.sabor.hr/>

<sup>7</sup> Mato Stimac, Karmela Caparin and Nevenka Majdenic from HDZ; Radimir Cacic from HNS; and Davorko Vidovic and Ljubica Brdaric from SDP.

<sup>8</sup> Advisor to the Education, Science and Culture Committee Jasna Medimorec, Secretary of the Family, Youth and Sport Committee Aleksandra Biscupec Sevic, Secretary of the Gender Equity Committee Natalija Magdic and Secretary of the Agriculture and Forestry Committee Jasmina Kregar.

During the study mission, which was conducted from June 5 through June 17, 2004, participants observed three state-level public hearings, as well as a King County Council session and a town hall meeting. In addition to observing the hearings, the participants met with the Speaker of the Washington State Legislature, the chief and deputy chief clerks, and numerous legislators and committee staff to discuss the details of organizing public hearings and the benefit they provide to the legislative process. The participants also met with the Washington State Public Disclosure Commission (PDC), the government body that monitors campaign contributions and the payment and expenses of lobbyists. The participants expressed a strong interest in creating a similar body in Croatia, as one currently does not exist. In addition to a disclosure commission, the participants agreed in the action plan they developed at the end of the trip to work as a group to develop Rules of Procedure for the use of public hearings in committees (The group's action plan is attached). In September 2004, NDI provided the participants with example rules of procedure that outline the use of public hearings to assist the group in fulfilling its action plan.

*"I view the job of an MP with even more responsibility, more importance, and as a greater opportunity to help citizens in solving their problems."*

**-Nevenka Majdenic**, MP, member of the Finances and Budget Committee, and member of the Committee for Information and Media

*"It helped me to clarify and define the way I can involve citizens in the legislative process—in other words, public hearings—without much procedure, and quickly and efficiently."*

**-Aleksandra Biscupec Sevic**, Secretary to the Committee on Family, Youth and

### ***Assistance to Party Caucuses***

#### ***Party of Liberal Democrats (Libra)***

Libra, being a new party, needed help strengthening its parliamentary caucus. In particular, the caucus was disconnected with the party's field operations. As a result, NDI held numerous consultations and workshops with various Libra caucus members to discuss solutions to this problem, which resulted in the caucus creating a newsletter that introduced caucus members to the public, reported on recent activities in the *Sabor*, and invited the public to get in touch with the caucus. NDI also helped the caucus increase its use of volunteers to produce communication tools such as the newsletter and conduct other activities to connect the caucus to the party headquarters and local branches.

#### ***Croatian Peasants' Party (HSS)***

The work of the HSS parliamentary caucus, as well as other party clubs, is hampered by an inadequate number of support staff. As there is no money in the *Sabor's* budget for additional employees, NDI worked with the HSS leadership in 2003 to develop a creative solution to the problem. During the election campaign, NDI noticed that the party had many youth volunteers that could be recruited after the elections to volunteer on a part-time basis. NDI held numerous meetings with party leaders, including Secretary General Stanko Grcic and Deputy Chairperson of the HSS Parliamentary Caucus Ljubica Lalic, members of the HSS Expert Council, and potential volunteers to discuss the idea and to help the party formulate and implement the project. Once HSS recruited 14 youth participants and assigned two or three volunteers to each MP, NDI held a joint event with all members of the parliamentary caucus and the HSS student volunteers in July to facilitate communication and begin to develop good working relationships.

Like many parliamentary caucuses, the HSS faced difficulties communicating with its party headquarters and local branches. As a result, in consultations with the caucus NDI explored ways in which the party could build a better system of intra-party communication and improve morale among local HSS members and voters. One of the steps the HSS took to solve this problem was the development of a new website that communicated the work of the caucus, the headquarters, the party branches and the local councilors. The Institute also worked with the caucus to help improve its communication with its European counterparts, specifically the European Peoples' Party (EPP), which was viewed as favoring the HDZ, over the HSS. NDI organized a meeting with HSS leaders and Meus can der Poel of the Dutch Christian Democratic Party (CDA), at which HSS MPs were given the chance to express their pro-European position and their interest in strengthening ties with the EPP.

#### *Social Democratic Party (SDP)*

The SDP caucus had difficulty effectively countering opposition to the party and its policies, often leaving attacks unaddressed. NDI conducted many consultations with the caucus to find constructive avenues for debate and communication. As a result of these consultations the SDP began more actively participating in the parliamentary question and answer period and created a document with rebuttal lines to common criticisms that was given to the caucus, the party headquarters and local branches.

In the spring of 2003, NDI arranged for consultant David Evans (UK/Labour Party) to meet with the SDP caucus to discuss the challenges faced by the Labour party as it took over the reigns of government in 1997, as well as the specific challenges faced by the Labour caucus in Westminster on gaining information on government legislative intentions. Due to interest from the caucus, David Evans held a second consultation for 26 SDP MPs to further discuss message development and media communication, using his own party's successful campaign as an example.

#### *Croatian People's Party (HNS)*

In January 2004, NDI partnered with the Friedrich Naumann Stiftung (German Liberal Party Foundation) to hold a workshop for the HNS caucus on defining the role of the caucus, arranging caucus operational structures and developing lines of internal communication. Six HNS MPs, including HNS President and Deputy Speaker of the *Sabor* Vesna Pusic, the former Minister for Construction and Public Works Radimir Cacic, and Secretary General of the HNS Srecko Ferencak, as well as five members from the HNS central office were in attendance. The two-day session addressed four main topics: HNS' political territory and the need for the party to develop expertise in specific areas consistent with the party's platform; caucus organization and individual rights of MPs; caucus support staff and their role within the caucus; and raising the profile of MPs to improve their popularity and image, increase support for the party and to motivate party members. NDI continued to work with the caucus on this issues through numerous consultations with the caucus chair and the party's headquarters.

## GONG

During this grant period, NDI provided GONG with a subgrant for \$370,000 to cover organizational costs and program activities, such as the monitoring of the November 2003 parliamentary elections.

In addition to monitoring all Croatian elections, including local by-elections, GONG conducted a number of programs aimed at involving citizens in the democratic process and connecting elected officials with the public. For example, GONG sponsored "Citizen Hours," in which elected and government representatives, including President Stipe Mesic, participated in radio call-in shows or townhall meetings to discuss topical issues with the public; the "I Vote for the First Time" program, which through hundreds of workshops in high schools through Croatia, informed thousands of students of their responsibilities as voters; a parliamentary internship program that placed university students with MPs and government agencies; and the "Open Parliament" program, which provided public tours of the *Sabor* for hundreds of students and taught visitors about the legislative and representative functions of the parliament.

In addition to providing financial assistance, NDI provided technical assistance as needed. In 2003, NDI facilitated an internal examination of GONG's organizational roles and responsibilities through a two-day workshop in Samobor, followed by a second two-day workshop in Brod na Kupa. The objective of the first workshop was to identify the various audiences GONG has and to examine the expectations that external groups have of the organization in order to help better define the roles and responsibilities of GONG staff and the organization as a whole. Once the expectations were identified, discussions turned to ways to address them. Teamwork and internal and external communications, were discussed in the second workshop. The group discussed roles and responsibilities and how they could better solve problems and give each other regular feedback.

These were the only formal workshops NDI held with GONG during this grant. NDI's assistance to GONG decreased from previous grant periods, due to the increased organizational capacity of GONG. While formal trainings did not routinely take place, NDI held regular consultations with GONG and made itself available when GONG needed advice. GONG's final report for work under NDI's subgrant is attached.

## IV. RESULTS

### *Political Party Component*

In the last two years, NDI's work with political parties to improve their organizational and communication structures and their ability to reach out to voters has produced many results. Below are results observed during the program.

**Objective 1** Targeted political party caucuses and elected representatives establish mechanisms for communication among their elected officials, party members and voters.

- As a result of NDI's party liaison program, all of the Institute's political partners at the time—the HSLS, the HSS, the SDSS, the HNS, the LS and the SDP—developed databases with information on the party's local councilors. The parties also created new newsletters or added a column to an existing publication to highlight local councilors and their initiatives. LS went as far as to create an association of local councilors across the country. The association of local councilors was a mechanism for party communication and voter contact described in the first workshop held by NDI for party liaisons, which was attended by Mirjana Jakusic, the LS liaison. The databases, publications and associations allowed the parties to more easily communicate with local councilors, and for councilors to communicate among themselves about party policy, challenges and best practices.
- Following advice from NDI to publicize the work of the party's MPs and to improve communication among its members, HSLS hired a caucus coordinator, whose responsibilities include extracting quotes and transcripts from *Sabor* sessions, and putting them on the website and e-mailing them to party branches to ensure that members are updated on the party's activities in the *Sabor*.
- Following a recommendation NDI made at a training session in October 2003 at the Libra's national headquarters to communicate its accomplishments and position on issues, the party sent a letter to people who signed a petition organized by Libra to abolish mandatory military service. Following is the translated text of the letter:

From: LIBRA – Party of liberal democrats [libra@libra.hr]  
 Sent: Tuesday, November 04, 2003 11:49 AM  
 Subject: Acknowledgement

Dear XXXXX,

We would like to thank you for signing the PETITION FOR ABOLITION OF OBLIGATORY MILITARY SERVICE and want to inform you that 30000 signatures have been collected. LIBRA has also created proposals on the law, which have been put on the agenda at the last Parliament session and now is waiting for the new assembly of the Parliament. Based on our initiative the Government of the Republic of Croatia has made a decision to make a study on the establishing professional Croatian army force, which will be finished by the end of the year. LIBRA is still pleading for abolition of the obligatory military service. Thanks to your signature we are a step closer to that goal.

Please visit our web sites on [www.libra.hr](http://www.libra.hr)

Sincerely yours,

Jozo Radoš, President of LIBRA

- In early 2004, Liberal Party President and MP Ivo Banac visited party branches in Dalmatia to solicit party members' opinions on policy issues in preparation for the 2005

local elections. NDI introduced Banac to the idea of conducting a branch tour for this purpose and helped him organize the meetings.

- President of the HSS Sisak County Organization and Party Spokeswoman Marijana Petir convened a meeting of Sisak county party leaders and local councilors to define the party's platform for the 2005 local elections. Together, the group created an action plan. NDI had previously expressed to Petir the importance of focusing on local issues and involving party members in the policy development process.
- Based on NDI's suggestion, HSS will now use youth volunteers from the 2003 parliamentary election campaign as voluntary caucus staff. The volunteers will conduct research for the caucus and help conduct constituent services, such as communicating the work of the caucus to voters and helping solve citizens' problems. While the volunteers will work for the caucus, the party has assigned two or three volunteers to each MP. This assistance is needed due to the heavy legislative docket and a lack of *Sabor* funds to hire additional caucus staff.
- HSLs party branches organized three roundtables on educational reform in Slavonski Brod, Petrinja and Dalmatia. The Deputy Minister for Education attended all three roundtables and his attendance was coordinated by the party liaison. All information on the roundtables was shared with the local councilors via the newsletter created and sent by the NDI-trained party liaison. In addition, the Medumigorje branch organized a roundtable on quality of life issues for Roma children.
- In an effort to communicate effective campaign techniques to party branches and create uniform campaign practices throughout the country, the HSLs headquarters developed a booklet for its members covering such topics as how to reach voters, optimal information flow and communication mechanisms between headquarters and local organizations, party visibility and credibility and the importance of a uniform visual identity.
- The HSLs produced three editions of an e-mail newsletter and distributed it to the party local councilors. The newsletter was also mailed to local councilors who did not have access to computers. The party liaison to NDI, Kristina Budimir-Kunic, used the newsletters and a local councilors' e-mail group to research issues and exchange and share information with councilors across the country. She also used her contacts within the parliament to provide assistance to the local councilors and to obtain specific information on issues for the newsletter.
- Following advice from NDI, in June 2002 the SDP began to create a regular newsletter. The circulation is 3,500, and it is sent to all local councilors, party members, supporters, journalists, and other interested parties. The newsletter serves as a public relations piece, with news about the successes and actions of the government, MPs and party branches.
- The HSS began to regularly send information to local councilors and party officials on national issues, party positions and decisions, party information and necessary forms on a weekly basis. The weekly update is sent by e-mail as well as by regular post. In

addition, the HSS began publishing a more modern, easier to read version of its monthly newsletter to party members.

- The SDP stated that in the run-up to the 2005 local elections it will hold a series of “townhall meetings” across the country to get local branch members’ input into the types of issues that should be included in the local election platforms.

**Objective 2** Select political parties develop and use tools, such as information technology, to identify and contact potential voters, members and volunteers.

- In the lead-up to the parliamentary elections, 13 party branches actively used NDI’s GOTV software program: HNS: Velika Gorica, Zagreb, Varazdin, and Osijek; Libra: Djakovo and Osijek; LS: Dubrovnik, Split and Zagreb; and HSS: Trogir, Rijeka, Sibenik and Slavonski Brod. The parties used the database component of the software to track voter contact and to determine which voters should be targeted.
- Following consultations with NDI, in 2002, the HSS developed a new website that is more modern, clear, accessible and navigable. All internal party groups, including local councilors, caucuses, party branches, are represented, and the website highlights important information from the *Sabor*.
- The HNS put its full pre-campaign issue-based programs on its web site, and distributed leaflets with highlights to citizens. On hot summer days, the party distributed hand-fans containing the party’s program to voters.
- NDI provided advice to the SDSS as it developed a party website to serve as an additional channel of communication with the voters. The site includes the party’s platform and organizational structure, as well as a function to join the party online. In addition to information about the party, the website details the voting regulations both for those living in Croatia and for members of the diaspora. The address is [www.sdss.hr](http://www.sdss.hr). The SDSS, which had not previously been a parliamentary party, won three seats.
- During an unannounced visit in Rijeka to observe campaign activities, NDI witnessed volunteers in the HSS office telephoning targeted voters using the script and voter log sheet that the Institute helped the party create. At the HNS/PGS kiosk, volunteers were delivering campaign materials and, more importantly, asking for input from the public on local issues, such as hospitals.
- In an effort to communicate effective campaign techniques to party branches and create uniform campaign practices throughout the country, the HSLs headquarters developed a booklet for its members covering such topics as how to reach voters, optimal information flow and communication mechanisms between headquarters and local organizations, party visibility and credibility and the importance of a uniform visual identity.

- As part of a follow-up exercise to an NDI training, participants from the Libra branch in Daruvar developed a issue questionnaire to identify potential voters and shape local party policy, which was shared with party headquarters. It now serves as a template throughout the country for field work.
- After receiving training from NDI on citizen outreach and petitions, members of the HSS Kutina and Popovac branches held separate petition drives in March and gathered over 700 signatures in support of implementing proposed agricultural reforms. Party members from a neighboring municipality met with the municipal mayor to discuss the possibility of lowering the price that was put on land to be leased.
- The HNS tailored NDI's *Campaign Guide* to its own needs and published a special issue of its party bulletin called "The Campaign Guide" where, in addition to the president's motivational letter to party members, members found contact information for all of the district offices, descriptions of local issues on which to campaign, rebuttal lines and membership forms to recruit new members. HNS Secretary General Srecko Ferencak said that he organized the party's election headquarters by following advice found in NDI's *Campaign Guide*, noting that it was "simple and easy to implement."
- During a training session for the HNS, NDI convinced the party to translate its campaign materials into Italian to reach out to the large Italian minority in Istria. This greatly improved the party's capacity for voter outreach.
- In June 2004, Libra fielded an issue-based questionnaire to identify potential voters and shape party policy that NDI had helped the party create in April. In total, 220 citizens in Zagreb completed the questionnaire that dealt with the environment, education, entrepreneurship, regional development, traffic, water and culture. Libra conducted this activity in partnership with the LS, the first such joint activity resulting from the Agreement of Cooperation signed by the two parties. The parties used the results to inform their party platforms and will use the personal information to target voters in the next elections.
- The HNS youth organization organized a lottery game to gather voter information. It proved to be an effective tool, as anyone who wished to play needed to supply all of his/her personal information.
- The HSS and the SDP district offices in Rijeka and the SDP and the HNS offices in Varazdin implemented many of the suggestions NDI made during its pre-election training. The district offices posted contact lists, a daily activity calendar, district maps and event photos.
- After receiving suggestions from NDI to develop targeted campaign material, the HSS office for electoral district 2 in central Croatia created specific posters and leaflets for the district, which highlighted issues of regional interest.
- The HSU implemented the *Walk and Talk Guide* produced by NDI/Croatia. As a result of its "ear-to-ear campaign," HSU won three seats in parliament and almost passed the 5

percent threshold in electoral districts 1 and 2. When NDI called the party to congratulate it on its success, it thanked NDI and said, “we just did what you told us to do.”

- In 2004 after training from NDI, the LS branch in Split developed a questionnaire to identify local issues and potential voters that it fielded to the citizens in the district. The party plans to use the results in the development of its 2005 local election platform.
- Following NDI’s training on how to respond to political attacks or negative comments, the SDP started to issue rebuttal lines via e-mail to its members in the field to help them respond to opposition attacks in a unified way. When HDZ President Sanader accused the “very top of the Government,” specifically SDP and HSS top officials, of spying on the opposition and the media, the SDP leaders immediately rejected Sanader’s claims, responding that “Sanader’s accusations are obviously based on his own memory of what the HDZ was doing extensively when it was in government.” This line was sent out to the field offices to ensure all the SDP members had a unified message.
- The SDP is in the process of creating an academy within the party to train members in skills such as campaign organizing, membership development and direct voter contact. Many NDI materials will be used. In addition, with NDI’s assistance, the SDP created a toolkit with information about the party and templates of political tools such as membership questionnaires.

**Objective 3** Targeted political party branches develop cooperative programs across county and regional boundaries.

- The LS created an association of local councilors from throughout the country to promote greater communication and coordination among local councilors and between councilors and the party. Fifty local councilors (out of a total of 110) were in attendance at the first meeting, during which the president and members of the executive board were elected and a declaration adopted. This mechanism for party communication and voter contact was described in the first workshop held by NDI for party liaisons, which was attended by Mirjana Jakusic, the LS liaison.
- The HSS began to hold regular monthly meetings of party branch secretaries at its party headquarters after advice from NDI on strengthening internal party communication and cooperation.
- The HSLS developed a membership database and listserv that have been used by local branches and officials to find answers to policy and operational questions, discuss party challenges and share best practices. For example, the head of the fire department in Cakovec submitted a question to the database on financing fire departments and received an answer from Slavonski Brod on their local policy on this issue.
- In late 2004, the SDP headquarters developed a training academy to train party activists from throughout Croatia. In addition to providing the members with campaign and

organizational development and communication skills, it will help bring together party members from different election districts to promote increased cooperation and interaction.

- The president of the Otocec HSLS branch organized a first-time meeting of party branch presidents in the region.
- As a result of consultations with NDI, the HSLS began collecting and sending travel and activity schedules of party leaders, MPs and ministers to its branch offices in order to enhance communication and coordination between offices.

**Objective 4** The participation of women and youth as members in and representatives of political parties is increased.

- In 2002, with the help of NDI, IDS formally created a party youth wing to allow more opportunities for women and youth within the party at all levels.
- As a result of NDI's extensive work with the youth wings of the HSS, the HNS, the IDS and the LS each has developed the following:
  - A fully functioning e-mail group;
  - Completed mission and vision statements as well as a strategic development implementation plan and timetable;
  - A contract between the youth wing and each participant to implement the plan and to work toward its completion;
  - Activities and designated individuals responsible for each activity; and
  - A system in which volunteers coordinate the activities of work committees to ensure the implementation of the group's strategic plan.
- Karolina Leakovic, secretary of the SDP Women's Forum and participant in NDI's global forum, *Win with Women*, organized a women's room at the SDP annual party convention to publicize the work of Women's Forum in an effort to increase its role within the party. The room displayed materials of the SDP Women's Forum, as well as books and other printed materials produced by women's NGOs. This was the first time such a room was organized at the convention.
- At the SDP annual party convention on May 8, 2004, the Zagreb Youth Organization submitted amendments to the new party statute that was voted on at the event. While the amendment did not pass, it was the first time the youth organization made such an effort. Unhappy with some of the proposed changes to the party statute, the organization approached NDI for help. NDI attended the SDP Youth Forum to make a presentation on how European party statutes are modified and provided information on how to craft and introduce an amendment.
- With NDI's assistance, the HNS Youth Organization administered a questionnaire – the first of its kind for the youth branch – in the Croatian university towns of Rijeka, Osijek, Zagreb and Split on how people felt about the party's stance on key policy issues. The

organization provided information on the potential voters and opinions to the party headquarters to show the value of the wing to the party and to help influence party policy.

- In response to NDI's encouragement for increased participation of women and youth, the HSS named MP Marijana Petir its new spokesperson. Petir, who is under 40, was an active participant in NDI's political party, women's and parliamentary training workshops.
- When NDI brought women members from the SDSS together in a workshop for the first time in the party's history, participants developed an action plan for future work as a cohesive body.

**Objective 5:** Targeted political parties develop an outreach strategy in advance of the parliamentary elections that utilizes their respective party structures – ministers, elected officials and party headquarters – and articulates their achievements to party activists within party branches.

- NDI's presentation to the SDP leadership in November 2002 using trainers from the British Labour Party and numerous consultations and training sessions on the importance of a communications plan for elections yielded many results. The SDP devised a communications plan, created and disseminated a booklet documenting the party's achievements to all members, and hired 15 new staff to serve as liaisons with field organizations to help coordinate the campaign. The development a detailed communication plan has now become the norm for the party.
- The HNS urged each district to create its own campaign plan and send it to the headquarters. The party used these plans to develop a schedule for party leaders, such as Party President Vesna Pusic and Minister of Public Works and Reconstruction Radimir Cacic, to visit the field organizations. HNS leaders traveled frequently to the different campaign offices.
- As a result of consultations with NDI on how to best target minority voters, HSS MP and Campaign Organizer for electoral district 12 (the country-wide minority slates) Zdenka Cuhnil developed a door-to-door campaign. Before beginning the campaign, Cuhnil evaluated the concentration of minority voters throughout the country and strategically chose areas to best use her limited resources. Cuhnil was re-elected to parliament.
- In the run-up to the 2003 parliamentary elections, the Libra branch in Virovitica held two receptions for 80 citizens during which they were able to talk to party leaders, including Party President Rados, Deputy Prime Minister Granic, and Caucus Chair Ivo Skrabalo. Through this event and similar outreach activities prompted by NDI training, the branch increased its membership from 11 members at the beginning of the year to 27 members and 40 high school age volunteers by the end of March. It also increased the participation of women and youth. The candidate list for the local by-election was made up of 65 percent women and 37 percent youth.

- As a result of training from NDI in Varaždin in district 3, the SDP developed a campaign strategy that included many small events with party and elected officials throughout the district versus holding fewer large scale events. This approach worked well in the district due to its lack of large centralized cities.

**Objective 6:** Targeted party branches conduct outreach activities that include party activists and elected and government officials.

- In the lead-up to the 2003 parliamentary elections, in Koprivnica in electoral district 2, the parties of the governing coalition absorbed NDI's message that activities should be publicized in a lively and visible fashion that engages and motivates citizens to participate. The SDP organized and effectively publicized an event, "Recite nam sve!" ("Tell us everything"), where citizens could express their policy views to party leaders. The event attracted a large turnout, including many non-party members. Before the event, young activists hung posters throughout the city and on the day of the function they wore sandwich boards and stood in crossroads and in front of buildings, speaking with the public and encouraging them to attend. After the event, the activists organized a gathering of the party leadership and citizens. This was one of ten such events organized by the SDP during the campaign.
- Based on NDI's meeting with SNS Secretary General Milorad Vojvodic and suggestions to use the party's 44 local councilors to test the voters' attitudes on whether or not to run in the upcoming parliamentary elections or to urge voters to support a mainstream party, the SNS presidency created a 14-question survey, which the local councilors and party members distributed in March. Using the information collected, the party decided to contest the elections.
- HSLs party branches organized three roundtables on educational reform in Slavonski Brod, Petrinja and Dalmatia. The Deputy Minister for Education attended all three roundtables and his attendance was coordinated by the party liaison. All information on the roundtables was shared with the local councilors via the newsletter created and sent by the party liaison.
- In March 2003, NDI conducted a training session for HSS councilors from Sisak County on how to be more effective as local councilors. Petitions were introduced as a way for councilors to create the political will to bring about change, in this case on the implementation of the new Law on Agricultural Land. After the seminar, HSS councilors from the Kutina branch organized a local petition to urge the Ministry of Agriculture to launch an investigation into the implementation of the new agricultural law. The investigation found some questionable practices, which resulted in the Ministry of Agriculture suspending the implementation on the law. This has given the local HSS councilors, who sit in opposition, a real sense of the role they can play in the oversight of the HDZ/HSLs controlled executive.
- As a result of the work that Stanko Kordic accomplished in his role as HNS liaison to NDI's party program – creating a data base of all HNS local councilors, traveling to each

branch office to acquaint himself with the local councilors and creating a column for the party's monthly – he assumed more responsibility within the party. As a result of Kordic's work, the party's election strategy to work at the grassroots level in the field and to use local councilors as the backbone of this strategy.

- The Libra branch in Cakovec, which was trained by NDI, organized and invited citizens to a public outreach event that included party officials – a party entitled “Rock isn't Dead.” Libra members from the Koprivnica and Daruvar branches attended. The branch also organized a public rally with Minister of European Integration Neven Mimica speaking on Croatia's accession to the EU.

### *Unanticipated Political Party Program Results*

- Mirjana Petir, spokeswoman for the HSS, gave a statement to the newspaper *Globus* in late 2004 explaining that the next coalition agreement HSS entered into would focus first on the problems facing Croatia, second on the party program designed to deal with the problems and lastly on the personalities of the different parties. The last parliamentary coalition agreement only dealt with personalities. This framework for the coalition agreement was based on the example provided by NDI trainer Meus van der Poel. His party, the CDA, used it to negotiate coalition agreements in the Netherlands. In 2005, the HSS formed a pre-election coalition with the SDP, which followed the priorities laid out by Petir. As part of this agreement, the parties created joint issue-based platforms on the local level. NDI held multiple training sessions with both the HSS and the SDP on the importance of local party platforms, and in post-parliamentary election consultations told the HSS that its disappointing performance could be blamed, in part, on the fact that the party did not clearly articulate the parties that it would work with once elected.
- The SDP conducted a summer school for youth party activists in 2004. While past training was conducted in a lecture format, the party leadership adopted the more interactive approach that it was exposed to in NDI workshops, with discussions and small break-out groups.

### **Parliamentary Development Program**

While the parliament is still in need of further development in the areas of government oversight and public consultation, many improvements have been made during the period of this agreement. The staff have increased the services they provide to MPs and have developed mechanisms to promote them and thereby increase their usage. Caucuses have begun to participate more fully in the parliamentary process by coordinating the work and messages of MPs and publicly questioning acts of the government. Committees have begun the process of implementing public hearings. Below are results of NDI's parliamentary program:

**Objective 7** Targeted committees develop policies incorporating citizen input.

- As a result of the June 2004 study mission to Washington State on the role of public hearings in the legislative process, participants developed an action plan that sets out the steps the group will take to produce Rules of Procedures for the use of public hearings in legislative committees.
- As a result of the study mission to Washington State, the Committee on Family, Youth and Sport allowed youth to attend an open committee session on youth issues. The committee plans to continue holding open committee sessions.
- NDI brokered an agreement between the Croatian Law Center and the Committee for Information, IT and Media on a process for drafting and reviewing legislation, and conducting public hearings. The Committee for Information, IT and Media conducted a public presentation outlining the project of introducing IT in the *Sabor* in order to streamline information and reduce the amount of paper.

**Objective 8** Parliamentary caucuses participate more fully in the parliamentary process.

- The main obstacle to participating in the parliamentary process and communicating with constituents for many parliamentary caucuses is a lack of time and the lack of funds to hire assistants. To solve this problem, based on NDI's suggestion, the HSS now uses youth volunteers from the 2003 parliamentary election campaign as voluntary caucus staff. The volunteers conduct research for the caucus and perform constituent services.
- Chairman of HNS Parliamentary Club Dragutin Lesar, whom NDI trained and held consultations with to improve the internal organization of caucus, made steps to strengthen the HNS parliamentary club. He imposed mandatory Thursday meetings, regardless of whether the *Sabor* is in session, to coordinate the activities of HNS MPs and improve communication among caucus members. The caucus also assigned each MP a portfolio of issues for which he/she is responsible to ensure that the caucus is active on every issue, presents a unified argument and most efficiently uses its time and resources.
- After reading the section of the *Guide for MPs* on a parliamentarian's right to information, in an effort to provide government oversight, the Croatian Party of Rights (HSP) caucus wrote letters to all government ministries requesting key documents, such as cabinet papers and stating that they would visit the ministries to obtain the information. The HSP used the information they obtained during parliamentary debate and the question and answer period.

**Objective 9** The internal management and functioning of parliament is strengthened.

- Following advice from NDI that a designated room in the *Sabor* for the purpose of training parliamentary staff and MPs would be beneficial, the secretary general dedicated a room on February 20. NDI provided four computers and a printer for this training room. The room allows parliamentary leadership to train staff using up-to-date information technology. The skills gained by the staff strengthen parliament by enabling them to provide increased services to the MPs including legislative research.

- In October 2003, the official *Sabor* website, which had been accessible in a trial mode since June 2003, was officially launched. Since then, it has received 66,000 hits. NDI helped the *Sabor* create the site to promote two-way communication between the citizens, as primary users, and the parliament. In addition to MPs activities, citizens can now also find information on the work of committees with agendas and minutes, the announcement of the meetings of the parliamentary presidency, which is especially interesting for journalists, and most of the tabled bills. In addition, the new website provides space for individual MPs and party clubs to create their own pages with technical support provided by the parliament. Thus, this information technology tool also contributes to increased outreach for the political parties. The site also strengthens the internal operations of parliament, because MPs and staff can use the website to access legislation, a regularly updated calendar and information on various parliamentary committees and departments. Through numerous consultations, NDI provided the *Sabor* with advice on to what to include on the website.
- A working group of senior parliamentary staff developed a *Guide for MPs* with assistance from NDI. The guide contained practical information for new MPs, such as a section with frequently asked questions and answers. When NDI observed the first parliamentary question and answer period, it noted that many MPs carried and referenced the *Guide for MPs*. Staff based its content on a questionnaire they administered to MPs at the end of the previous session on what they wish they had known at the beginning of their mandate. As something like this has never been previously undertaken by the *Sabor*, it is a testament to the increased skills of the parliamentary staff and functioning of the parliamentary leadership.

**Objective 10** The skill and knowledge capacity of parliamentary staff is strengthened such that their ability to provide independent research services to MPs, committees and caucuses is strengthened.

- Eighty parliamentary staffers and 25 MPs were trained on Internet and e-mail usage as well as basic computer processing. This type of training was a first for both the *Sabor* and for most of the MPs. This strengthens the ability of parliamentary staff to provide independent research services to MPs, committees and caucuses.
- In the *Sabor* reading room, where NDI installed four computers in 2001, it has become more difficult to get a place at a computer. Although this is not ideal, as it demonstrates a lack of equipment, it is an indicator of increased interest in internet research and word processing. The director of the *Sabor* Information-Documentation Department stated that this is also a direct result of NDI's computer courses. Parliamentary staff that had never before come to the reading room are now regularly using the reading room computers for legislative research.
- With funding and technical assistance from NDI, the *Sabor's* Information and Documentation Center prepared a pamphlet for MPs and other staff on the services it offers, such as transcripts of parliamentary sessions, parliamentary statistics and

documents about legislation and amendments. As part of the brochure, the Center developed a logo so that MPs and staff can easily identify publications from the department. The brochure was printed and distributed in October 2004. Additionally, the Information and Documentation Center has committed to publishing a periodic newsletter to update MPs and staff on new resources and materials.

## **GONG**

Since its creation in 1997, GONG has become one of the most recognized and respected NGOs in Croatia and in the region. In 2000, GONG broadened its mandate from domestic election monitoring to good governance. GONG has expanded its mission to focus on increasing government and parliamentary transparency and improving communications between government officials and citizens through the following programs: "Citizen Hours," in which elected and government representatives meet with the public; the "I Vote for the First Time" program, which informs thousands of high school students of their responsibilities as voters; a parliamentary internship program for university students; and the "Open Parliament" program, which provides public tours of the *Sabor* and teaches visitors about the legislative and representative functions of the parliament. Below are results of the successes GONG had achieved, in part due to funding and technical assistance from NDI.

**Objective 11** Selected elected representatives develop and expand their constituency outreach activities.

- Between May 2002 and June 2004, GONG organized 383 "Citizens' Hours." These events, 133 of which were open panel discussions and 250 were live radio talk shows, provided an opportunity for government and political party officials to discuss topical issues with citizens and to present policy options. They featured 1,094 guests from various state institutions, national and local governments, NGOs, media, unions and the private sector. President Stipe Mesic participated in seven "Citizens' Hours" since the creation of the project. More than one hundred MPs, several ministers, and dozens of town and municipality mayors were also featured in the programs.
- Since 2002, GONG's internship program provided student interns to 57 MPs. The interns provided constituency services and research, which enabled the MPs to increase communication with their districts.

**Objective 12** GONG's capacity to manage its programmatic activities and financial resources increases in order to ensure the organization's sustainability.

- Due to the quality of GONG's programs, it was awarded the *Sabor's* Golden Coat of Arms for development of parliamentary life.
- GONG is recognized throughout the region as one of the premier domestic election monitoring and good governance NGOs. As a result, several organizations have requested GONG's assistance in providing training on organizational development and financial management. During the period of this award, GONG assisted such NGOs as

Council for the Defense of Human Rights and Freedom (CDHRF) in Kosovo, the Center for Civic Initiatives (CCI) in Bosnia-Herzegovina, MOST in Macedonia, the Center for Democratic Transition (CDT) in Montenegro, and the Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED) in Georgia on organizational development and technical aspects of election monitoring. GONG also sent members to monitor elections in Montenegro, Slovakia, Latvia, Armenia, Georgia and just recently in the 2004 presidential election in Ukraine.

- Due to the trust and respect GONG holds in the international community, there was no large-scale international monitoring effort for the 2003 Croatian parliamentary elections. While the OSCE send a small delegation, they announced that a full scale monitoring effort was not needed due to the capacity of domestic groups such as GONG.

## V. Evaluation

### Guiding Principles

In implementing its program in Croatia over the past nine years, NDI has been guided by a set of principles that have greatly attributed to the program's success. They are as follows:

- Relationships with the parties were established at the *institutional* – and not personal – *level*. In the political party program, all requests for assistance were responded to through the office of the secretary general of the party. While the people in this position changed, NDI's relationship was with the office of the secretary general, not the individual. This focus on the institutional level guaranteed continuity with a party and protected the Institute from being drawn into party disputes and rivalries. Similarly, in its parliamentary program, institutional projects were coordinated through the office of the *Sabor's* secretary general and caucus work was arranged through the caucus chair. It was by these institutional lines that NDI defined its cooperation with its partners. In its relationship with GONG, the Institute was careful to provide assistance through the office of the president. NDI's strong relationship with the parties' secretaries general, the office of the secretary general of the *Sabor* and the president of GONG greatly enhanced the effectiveness of the Institute's assistance.
- NDI worked with the political parties as *partners*. NDI and the parties together identified key challenges, developed program activities, prepared agendas and located participants. Following training, seminars, workshops and other activities, NDI worked with party leaders and members through guided practice. Toward the end of NDI's programming, the Croatia team introduced a "co-production" model; for instance, with the HSS, an NDI consultant worked directly with a local party leader as she took the lead in preparing and conducting the event herself. This model built the capacity of the parties to conduct similar training without NDI assistance.
- In 1997, NDI-Croatia pioneered the development of a *memorandum of understanding* (MOU) with each party to clarify expectations of NDI and the party and to promote the sense of partnership. These agreements were not designed as strict legal contracts, but

rather as a measure to establish a sound partnership and to build trust with the party. MoUs have since been used by NDI throughout the region (and elsewhere) as important guarantors of commitment and clarification.

- To *create buy-in* from the parties on NDI's assistance, the Institute encouraged parties to help arrange or fund aspects of the training event. Initially, the parties agreed to provide a training venue (often their party offices) and all participant travel costs. In addition to lowering costs and creating a sense of ownership from the parties, this approach showed parties that they could organize such trainings themselves with the funds and assistance of an international organization. As the program progressed, parties often paid all seminar costs, including participants' meals. This contribution from the parties allowed NDI to conduct programming for an additional four months on a no-cost extension.
- *NDI never advocated for parties to adopt a specific policy or approach.* NDI focused on giving the parties the necessary knowledge and tools to enable them to make informed political decisions.
- The Institute placed a high priority on building a solid NDI *team*. Both NDI senior and junior staff members were encouraged to gain deeper political party knowledge and understanding and were provided opportunities to participate in and conduct trainings.
- Whenever possible, the Institute *linked parties with trainers from their European ideological counterparts*. These trainers were used repeatedly to build relationships that would continue after NDI's program in Croatia closed. A similar approach was taken in the *Sabor*. In the final months of the program, NDI facilitated an institutional relationship between the Dutch and Croatian parliaments.
- The Institute viewed its role as being a provider of technical assistance to political parties, parliament and GONG, not as a political commentator. As a result, NDI kept a *low media profile*. This allowed the spotlight to be on the political parties and helped build and maintain the trust of the Institute's partners.
- In the October 2004 close-out meetings, party leaders confirmed that NDI's *single-party* approach, whereby separate training sessions were held for each party, worked best. The single-party focus increased the level of trust and assured a greater sense of confidentiality with each party. NDI recognized that not all parties had the same capacity to absorb and so dedicated more time and resources to the larger parties.
- While single-party training worked well for many topics, NDI also held *multi-party* events, including coordinated campaign trainings at the local level, study missions, and the 1999 trade union-party conference. These events, particularly the study trips, fostered strong working relationships and cooperation among the participants.
- NDI did not develop political party programming in a vacuum. Separate *but linked civil society and parliamentary programs* allowed NDI to approach party building from different angles, connecting parties to a variety of other political and civic actors. For

example, NDI fostered a relationship between political parties and GONG, which helped lead to the creation of the parliamentary internship program.

- NDI ensured that its work with each party was *confidential*. Clear, professional lines were kept at all times, and the parties trusted NDI with sensitive information. This ensured an increased level of trust between NDI and the parties and allowed for consultations on sensitive party matters.
- For Croatian political parties, NDI's novel training methodology altered stereotypes of lectures. *Casual, enthusiastic* and *interactive trainings* broke down barriers within parties and brought together party leaders and officers in informal settings – often for the first time. Many parties stated that this approach helped to create a different atmosphere within the party and build relationships among party members.

### **Political Party Program**

When NDI began its work in Croatia in 1995, the Institute's political party partners in opposition were new, inexperienced, and constrained under Tudjman's shadow. As a result, NDI focused on party building and its programming was geared mainly to the elections: headquarters and branch organization; membership development; women and youth skills training; media relations; and campaign strategy. In 1999, NDI's partner parties used "walk and talk," a manual on direct voter contact and party organization, and other NDI assistance to come to power for the first time. They formed a six-party governing coalition, and soon discovered that the hard-won elections led to a new set of challenges related to legislative politics and governance. Like so many first-time reform governments, they were ill-prepared to govern and ill-equipped to sustain party structures. In response, NDI entered into a new and in certain respects more difficult phase of its program and focused on governance issues. In addition to continuing work with parties to bolster their structures, the Institute assisted them with parliamentary caucus development, trained local government counselors on how to use party branches for constituent relations, helped parties communicate with voters to promote government policies and began to link Croatian parties with their counterparts in Western Europe to build relationships that will be useful as Croatia moves close to European Union membership.

During the last nine years, Croatia's political landscape has evolved into an established, if crowded, field of parties on the right, left and center, with consensus on the country's geopolitical orientation. Political parties are able to do what parties should do in a democracy: contest elections, form governing and opposition coalitions, represent constituents in elected office, devise and articulate legislative agendas, and oversee the activities of government. Internally, party headquarters and branch operations are stronger and coordinated, women and youth are better able to exert influence within the parties, and at least one party has started training institutes to replicate NDI training.

While NDI's main political party partners lost the 2003 parliamentary elections, in large part due to their inability to provide a unified front to voters, they employed sophisticated techniques in targeting and contacting voters, such as the use of NDI's GOTV software, the creation of targeted campaign materials and the emphasis on direct voter contact. Many of these

tools and tactic were new to the parties, but will now continue to be employed in elections to come.

Additionally, the parties have learned from their mistakes. For example, the HSS lost votes because it did not clearly articulate its post-election coalition plans and vision. As a result of post-election consultations with party members and NDI, HSS has already formed a pre-election coalition with the SDP for the 2005 local elections. For the January 2005 presidential elections, all the parties of the former governing coalition supported Stipe Mesic, in an effort to elect him in the first round. While Mesic only received 49 percent of the vote and had to enter in a second round against the HDZ candidate, it was an important show of unity. The SDP, in an effort to reach out to voters and articulate its policy ideas, has stated that in the run-up to the local elections it will hold a series of “townhall meetings” across the country to get local branch members’ input into the types of issues that should be included in the local election platforms. During NDI’s close-out meetings, party officials noted that their electoral defeat has shown them that further reform is still needed.

#### Select Quotes from Party Leaders Regarding NDI’s Work

*“[NDI’s lessons were] very successful and internalized by not just the leadership level, but now as part of political culture and practices; it’s just what we do...”* – Vesna Pusic, President HNS

*“NDI has always been pre-emptive to our mistakes. We always liked your criticism, trainings, advice and suggestions. We always have the feeling we could learn so much from you.”* – Stanko Grcic, secretary general, HSS

*“Others come when explosions have already happened, NDI was there during the explosions.”* – Vojislav Stranimirovic, leader, Independent Serb Democratic Party (SDSS)

*“People were much more open to your trainings than if we had tried. The NDI training methodology was a novelty – no more stereotypes of ‘lecturing’. People became active. They learned and were not even aware of it, through jokes and other methods. Now they can transfer what they learned to other members. Your type of training and advice was very useful to us.”* – Stanko Grcic, secretary general, HSS

*“Cooperation with [the UK] Labour Party was most helpful for building strategy within the party...A key NDI opportunity was the David Evans lecture, in which he explained how to improve communication with the branches. We started to build connections and fix broken lines, but didn’t have enough time.”* – Igor Dragovan, secretary general, SDP

*“Karen and the team...showed direct approach and enthusiasm, which we appreciated... NDI combined casual approach with wisdom”* – Jozo Rados, LIBRA

*“People from HSS trust NDI; they respond to questions and you can talk like friends...NDI encouraged us, and educated us on how to be better leaders, organize, and present to public.”* – Marijana Petir, spokesperson and former MP, HSS

*“NDI came here, knocked on door, and said they could help. NDI never tried to influence us. They were neutral: ‘you should choose what you will do’. Others tried to influence our views/policies.”* – Marijana Petir, spokesperson and former MP, HSS

*“[With NDI leaving] we are losing our right hand”.* – Ljubica Lalic, vice president of party caucus, HSS

## Parliament

When NDI began working with the *Sabor* in 2000, the parliament lacked the ability to fulfill the broadened role it had acquired through constitutional reform that had shifted power from the presidency to the legislature that same year. Staff did not receive sufficient training to provide necessary research and support to MPs, the use of technology was minimal, caucuses were disorganized and did not fully play their role in the parliamentary process, committees did not reach out to experts or constituents and the public did not have access to the parliament building.

In four years, the *Sabor* has made many improvements, particularly in regard to parliamentary staff. The staff of the parliament has improved its service to MPs, including the development of an orientation manual for new members of parliament. *Sabor* departments have begun to offer a wider range of services and with the help of NDI have found ways to promote

the services to increase usage. The use of technology has also drastically improved. NDI provided the parliament with six computers during this grant period, four of which are in the *Sabor's* designated training room. As a result of the computer training NDI provided to more than 80 parliamentary staff and 25 MPs, the computers are in high demand. The *Sabor* developed a website, which is updated daily, that communicates the activities of parliament to the public and a database that allows MPs and staff to access transcripts and documents. Caucuses are beginning to reach out to constituents and conduct legislative research. Also, stemming from a NDI study trip to the Washington state assembly, MPs and staff are drafting rules of procedure for public committee hearings.

Despite these achievements, further development within the parliament is still necessary. Committees, while having started the process for implementation, still need to amend the rules of procedure and actively hold public hearings. Caucuses and individual MPs, while becoming increasingly better at questioning the actions of the government, must establish more permanent mechanisms to provide government oversight.

NDI encountered difficulties while implementing the parliamentary program, which limited the amount of results that were achieved. One of the greatest barriers to the implementation of NDI's activities has been the lack of time and resources that individual members of parliament have at their disposal. MPs are overworked, and unless they are the chairperson of a committee do not have an assistant, thereby leaving little time to devote to learning or engaging in new behavior. MPs are quite open to change and eager for assistance, but the time deficit was a significant problem. Additionally the schedule of the *Sabor* was extremely heavy, first with cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and most recently with harmonizing Croatian legislation with that of the European Union.

In addition, the *Sabor's* upper house of parliament, the House of Counties, was abolished in 2001. This led to a major restructuring of parliamentary organization. Just as the parliamentary leadership had adapted to these changes and was ready for further assistance, the parliamentary elections of 2003 resulted in a complete change in parliamentary leadership, including the appointment of a new secretary general of the *Sabor*. While NDI built strong relations with the new secretary general, this change delayed NDI's program activities, as the secretary general's office must approve all *Sabor* events.

## **GONG**

Beginning in 1997, NDI helped create Citizens Organized to Monitor Elections (GONG), which set out to provide Croatia's citizens with an independent, nonpartisan voice on the country's troubled election processes. With NDI assistance, GONG played a pivotal role in monitoring the 1999 parliamentary and presidential elections that unseated the HDZ, in mobilizing and training several thousand monitors and conducting a parallel vote tabulation, leading to vastly improved elections. GONG has gone on to increase government and parliamentary transparency and improve communication between government officials and citizens, in sponsoring "Citizen Hours", in which elected and government representatives meet with the public; the "I Vote for the First Time" program, which informs thousands of high school students of their responsibilities as voters; a parliamentary internship program for university

students; and the “Open Parliament” program, which provides public tours of the *Sabor* and teaches visitors about the legislative and representative functions of the parliament.

GONG’s accomplishments can in part be attributed to its strong organizational structure and clear vision of its mission. While expanded its programming from purely election related activities to work aimed at increasing governmental and parliamentary transparency, it did so slowly, carefully selecting and adequately staffing projects. Several international donors offered GONG funds to implement programs, but the organization declined as the activities were not consistent with its mission.

GONG has become a premier advocate for democratic practice in Croatia and a recognized authority on election monitoring and government-citizen dialogue across the region. GONG has developed strong organizational and financial management structures, and has successfully diversified its funding beyond NDI and other American donors. As a testimony to the respect GONG holds in the region, many other organizations have requested its assistance on improving their organizational structures and improving their programs, which GONG has provided.

## **VI. Attachments**

### **1. Local Councilors Manual**

### **2. Sample Party Specific Presentation on 2003 Focus Group Results**

### **3. Summary of Close-out Meetings**

### **4. GONG May 2002 through June 2004 Final Report**

**Effective Local Councilors  
Your Place in the Council, Among the People and in  
Your Party!**

**NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE FOR  
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/CROATIA**

**Preradoviceva 22  
10000 Zagreb – Croatia  
Tel. ++385 1 4854 698  
++385 1 4854 689  
++385 1 4854 694  
Fax ++385 1 4854 686  
E-mail [ndi@zamir.net](mailto:ndi@zamir.net)**

*This manual is designed to assist local councilors in understanding their role and place in the council, to motivate them to be creative and innovative as elected representatives and to provide practical examples and information that could increase their effectiveness as council members. As local councilors you have taken up the challenge to use democracy and public participation to shape your community and to provide your society with a better future.*

NDI also hopes to illustrate that democracy is not simply an event that takes place on election day, but that democracy is an ongoing process and the work of political parties and their representatives is a year-round challenge.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

After the May 2001 local elections in Croatia, more than 8,500 councilors were elected to 564 county, city and municipal councils. Now, nearly two years later, the “freshman months” are behind you. Participating in debate, preparing acts or amendments and asking questions have become part of your usual work as councilor. As one of those councilors, you are now faced with the challenge of creating an effective and open council that serves as a democratic model and represent the interests of your community. In addition, as an elected representative, you need to translate your political party programs into concrete governance proposals in order to sustain the confidence entrusted to you by your voters and your party. You also have the task to oversee the work done by the mayor and the administration, regardless of whether you are a loyal member of the governing coalition or a straightforward member of the opposition.

So, as councilors, what do we hope this manual brings to you?

- ❖ An understanding of the need, importance and possibilities available for involving citizens, civic organizations and communities in the process of local governance.
- ❖ A thorough understanding of a council’s functions and the possibilities for you and your party in it.
- ❖ Motivation to be more creative in your function as an elected representative. Ideas mentioned here are suggestions and not meant to dictate or impose a standard solution for the many different situations faced by councils and their communities.
- ❖ Exposure to practical ways to plan your work as an elected official and examples of possibilities and opportunities available for new councilors.

Local governance should be local, and reflect the unique needs and aspirations of the community. The average citizen sees the local councilor as a representative of his or her particular party and as the face and voice of the local or county government. It therefore becomes very important that you as a councilor work to successfully represent your party and the needs and goals of your community.

## **WHAT IS DEMOCRACY?**

The word democracy stems from the Greek language: *demos* (the people) and *kratos* (govern). Essentially, democracy means rule by the people; it is a group activity. It involves working, collaborating and negotiating with the people in your community. Democratic success depends on elected officials, such as yourself, inviting and welcoming public comment on your activities and decisions.

Democracy is much more than the ability of a majority or plurality of voters to grant and peacefully transfer political power and authority from one party or politician to another. True participatory democracy requires that citizens have the right and ability to actively participate in the political process at all levels; being able to communicate information about their priorities, their preferences and their needs to their government; to form special interest groups, neighborhood associations, clubs, political parties; and to encourage their government to respond with programs and policies to address shared needs.

The role of local government in a democracy is a very special one. It is not only to exercise its authority to make policy decisions on behalf of the community, but also, and very importantly, to provide services to the community – services of daily importance for citizens and the community. Local government representatives in democracies look for ways to help determine what the needs, preferences and priorities of their constituents are. Successful local government representatives strike a balance among the council, the community and the party in order to most effectively represent the interests and needs of citizens.

The council is the place where policy choices are made under the public eye. During council meetings, you should debate the pros and cons of proposed regulations or budgets, as well as request information about and explanations of the way the local administration delivers services to citizens. Regardless of whether you are in the majority or in the opposition, you should fully participate in each session and share ideas and visions. The strength of a democracy is demonstrated by the degree to which different

views can be expressed and choices made in a public manner, and citizens can participate in the determination of the direction in which their community will develop.

## **WHAT IS A COUNCILOR?**

### **THE COUNCILOR'S ROLE**

Local councilors have many various and important roles as elected representatives of the community, which include, but are not limited to, the following:

- ❖ Represent the interests of the community
- ❖ Represent the political party
- ❖ Offer opportunities for citizens' voices to be heard and use citizens' input to adopt acts that govern the local community
- ❖ Perform executive oversight
- ❖ Vote on budgets, with the goal of using resources effectively
- ❖ Vote on local acts and regulations that govern the local administration
- ❖ Prioritize policies at the local level
- ❖ Elect those who serve in the cabinet or have other leading functions within the administration

As a councilor, you should be a bridge between the citizen and the local administration, which means that you should be visible and accessible to all citizens, communicating with them on a regular basis. You should also work to develop your positions and proposals together with your party members, as representing people's interests will benefit your party and allow you to build strong policies, a key for future success.

Once you are in the council, the ideas you developed in your party will now stand the test of how effective they can be in terms of improving the lives of citizens and the community. "The test of cooking is in the eating. Let's go to the table!"

## **A COUNCILOR'S ROLE WITHIN THE COUNCIL**

Two of the main responsibilities of a local councilor within the council are executive oversight and budget management.

### **PUBLIC DEBATE ON LOCAL ACTS AND REGULATIONS**

During council sessions you are asked to vote on proposals that will regulate the life of the local community. Part of the voting process is debating the language and content of the proposal, which is an important part of ensuring that the proposal can reflect the needs and priorities of the community and of your party. It is important to prepare yourself for this public debate, as the strength of a democracy can be seen by the degree to which the value of the contradictory debate is considered. Even if you are a member of the majority you should participate, and not leave the argument to be made between the opposition and the executive. Always remain open to new information and use the comments that citizens give you in your presentations and deliberations. As a member of a council commission, try to study the subject with which you are dealing and target a limited number of issues on which to focus, so your presentations during debates will be more meaningful and valued.

### **EXECUTIVE OVERSIGHT**

In a functioning democracy, it is the job of elected officials to “oversee” the actions of the government. Although it may seem that the mayor and the executive government are the most visible and important, it is critical to remember that while the executive may be responsible for the day-to-day operation of the local governing units, it is the council that has the final responsibility for ensuring that the needs of the community are met.

If community needs are not being met, meaning that work or programs that have been approved and funded by the council are not being implemented or completed, then it is the responsibility of the elected officials and their parties to question the government and demand action. In order to question the government or to demand action, you must first gather information by communicating with affected citizens or concerned groups. Their

questions, suggestions and comments can then be used to organize your oversight work. In order to effectively obtain this information, you should schedule time to talk with these affected citizens or concerned groups, read their materials, set public hearings on specific issues, maintain regular office hours and stay abreast of local issues.

Using this background, you will be able to better use question opportunities at council meetings as well as participate in budget analysis, drafting of legislative and policy proposals and assessment of services provided to citizens. When reviewing cabinet minutes and tracking incoming and outgoing mail of the local government, you will find even more information that you as a councilor on behalf of your party can use to oversee the mayor and the executive administration.

### **BUDGET MANAGEMENT**

After defining what the local government should do during its mandate, there is the question of how this government will finance its actions. The answer is through the local government budget. It is important to note that the local government cannot spend money if the expenditure has not been foreseen in the budget. The more detailed the budget is, the more precisely the council can steer expenses made by the government.

As a councilor, one of your responsibilities is to ask for explanations and details about the budget numbers because you must understand how local government funds are being used. You do not need to be a financial specialist to play a useful role in the debate and decision on the local or county budget. The trick is to understand basic budget information and ask questions!!

To improve your effectiveness as a councilor, identify a part of the budget, a government program or department you have an interest in, work within your club to clarify this interest, then study it in detail. After your area of interest has been determined, go and ask questions of people who understand the subject; make use of people in and out of the government. Ask questions, which will inform you about the real impact of the money spent and provide a foundation for your recommendations and decisions.

### ***Effective Use of Budget Resources***

The annual budget must be prepared and approved before the beginning of the fiscal year, which starts on January 1 of each year. Accountability and legality is built into the system through the Ministry of Finance, which monitors the use of local government revenues, and the State Audit Agency, whose function is to audit local governments' financial statements at least once a year.

Discussions about the allocation of funds should also reflect the needs, desires and priorities identified by members and groups of the local community. Even if the funds are not ultimately allocated, this will give additional visibility and credibility to local councilors and raise levels of trust between the councilor and representatives of the community.

### ***Budget Transparency***

An open and transparent decision making process is most important when it comes to the budget. Set up a procedure for citizens and interest groups to express their comments and make suggestions on the "draft" budget before the council holds its final public debate and makes the final decision. The more people that are given access to the budgetary process the more legitimate the budget will be and fewer complaints will be heard. Publicizing the draft budget or sharing it with organized groups in the community are examples of ways to ensure community input into the process.

## **A COUNCILOR'S ROLE WITHIN THE COMMUNITY**

As an elected representative, the local councilor plays an important role within the community. The councilor should represent the interests of citizens and the broader community within the council, incorporate citizens and community groups into the council decision-making process and openly communicate local government policies and decisions.

### **REPRESENT AND ADVOCATE FOR THE COMMUNITY**

The first and most important role of local councilors is to represent their community. Anything that concerns or impacts the local community is the business of local councilors. You live in your neighborhood, so you should bring the views and concerns of your neighbors to the council. Also, if you are part of local organizations, you should make sure that the principles, issues and concerns that drive these organizations are reflected in the decision-making process in the council and local administration.

Councilors and their parties need to act as advocates on behalf of the community, articulating the concerns of its people, campaigning for action, and if necessary, challenging the decision makers in other levels of government to protect the interests of the community and its people.

Some of the matters that may arise in the council or committee meetings will be within the council's normal range of activities, but many matters, such as highway construction, may be outside the scope of the local government's immediate control. You, as a local councilor, together with the local government, should represent and advocate local needs in such matters.

### **GATHER INPUT FROM THE COMMUNITY**

In order to be a good community representative and advocate, you need to know the position of members of the community on relevant issues. In order to ascertain these positions, try to schedule regular times and places where citizens can come to talk with you. As a councilor you should always ask citizens for their views on local problems

and their recommendations for proposed solutions. Remember, as a councilor you must be visible and accessible to everyone in the community. In order to communicate with citizens, you can do such things as use your party newsletter to ask people to contact you as a councilor. As another example, you can make sure that press communiqués are sent not only to the media, but also to concerned citizens and groups, being sure to mention your contact information. Also, together with the volunteers of your party, you can go around the community with questionnaires on specific issues.

### **MAINTAIN COUNCIL TRANSPARENCY**

Your council should be transparent in its decision-making, and should explain its actions and policies to the public. If the public is included in a process that leads to a difficult but reasonable decision, citizens are more likely to maintain their confidence in the council and respect the decisions that are ultimately made. The council should also be ready and willing to accept justified criticism and constantly examine its work to ensure its quality. Politicians often think that the public cannot deal with difficult political decisions; more often the opposite is true.

As said before, democracy is not only about election day, but also about the participation of citizens in decision-making processes. Citizens can only do that if the work of councilors and of the council is accessible and if citizens are informed. By working in a transparent manner, and allowing citizens to participate, you will have more chances to keep voters' trust and ultimately, your position in the council.

Well-organized councils should ensure that maintaining transparency of all council functions and soliciting public input are part of the council's routine operations. The following list provides guidance for transparency and public involvement:

- ❖ Council and committee meetings should be publicized and posted before they are held.

- ❖ Agenda items and issues to be discussed at committee or council meetings should be scheduled in advance and publicized to ensure that citizens have the opportunity to speak in favor of or against any issue on the agenda.
- ❖ Councils and their committees should encourage NGOs and other groups to present their opinions on issues that affect their work.
- ❖ At the end of each council meeting, a time period should be provided for questions from the public. Specific time limits should be set for each citizen's presentation.
- ❖ Where there are opposing or conflicting views, the council should follow the rules of common sense and provide for a fair hearing for all.
- ❖ Minutes from each council meeting should be prepared and made available to the public at a specified time and place, for example in a public location or on the internet.
- ❖ Newsletters, public notice boards, press releases and e-mail should be used to consult and inform residents when decisions are made, and, whenever relevant, an opportunity for feedback from the public should be given before the final implementation of decisions takes place.

#### **ENCOURAGE DIVERSITY**

The council should be a place where the diverse opinions of the community can be heard. In many instances the makeup of the council will reflect the community's identity and its political diversity. In those instances:

- ❖ The membership of all committees or working bodies should reflect the composition of the council.

- ❖ Information should be shared equally with all councilors and no document of the local authority should be kept secret, except those restricted by law.
- ❖ Individual councilors should have an equal right to propose and suggest acts or amendments to any decision of the council and its committees.
- ❖ Each councilor should have equal access to all committee sessions. The councilor should also have the right to speak at all committee meetings, but not to vote if he or she is not a committee member.
- ❖ The council should consult and collaborate with other councils and governments in the region on issues of mutual interest. It should use all opportunities to communicate with other levels of government whose activities may affect the local community.

## **A COUNCILOR'S ROLE WITHIN THE PARTY**

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF THE COUNCILOR IN THE PARTY**

Before you were elected, you were an active member of your party branch office. You may have been the “wheel” around which the branch office turned. Now you are busy preparing for and attending council meetings, talking with the mayor and heads of departments, attending committee meetings and sitting on the boards of the municipal/city organizations. All of these activities are very important for your new responsibility, but they leave little time for party work. What is happening in your branch office? Is the party still active? Who is doing the work you used to do for the party? Is there someone responsible for the work of the branch office? Is there a plan to attract new members? What are the party's plans for the next election?

It is important for you to take the lead in reinvigorating the party now that the elections are over. Remember, you needed the help of the party to get elected; you will also need the help and support of the party again for the next election. Consequently, you must make sure that the branch office is still active and working. Without the party to provide this base of support, you may not be re-elected to another term of office.

Politicians often make the mistake of thinking that they do not need the party. They have the misconception that if they have a good image within the community, they, as politicians, will be able to reach their own political goals without party support. The opposite is true, though. It is only when you have an effective party that you have successful politicians – they go hand in hand.

Together with your party branch you should advance the political aims and visions for your community as expressed in your party's election program. It is important to demonstrate to citizens that you take seriously and will work on the promises you made before the election. This is an ongoing process that you cannot do alone – your party is the best place to develop your ideas and proposals.

### ***Acting as a Party Role Model***

As an elected representative, you must be an active role model for the party branch and its membership. You need to continuously motivate existing party members to become more active and encourage new members to become involved and take on responsibilities within the party. Some ways you can do this are to include the party branch in your constituency outreach work or use the party branch to organize events where citizens can meet with you and other party members and express their opinions on specific issues.

### ***Acting as a Party Spokesperson***

Remember that while doing work as a councilor, you are also working as a spokesperson for your party. While making presentations in the council, you should mention “we from the (party name) stand for this or that.” Alternatively, when contacting citizens you should explain what your party stands for. You and your party will benefit if you are able to consistently express your party’s message.

If voters can see that the party is responsive to local issues and that the elected representatives from your party are effective in making positive change, they will be more willing to become involved in community activities and more likely to vote for your party in the next election.

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PARTY CLUB IN THE COUNCIL**

Whenever you have two members or more from the same party in your council, you should organize yourselves as a party club, regardless of whether your club is formally recognized by the local statute or council’s rules of procedure. The party club should serve as the forum where councilors from the same party meet to plan and strategize, using shared visions, political programs and messages.

### ***The Functioning of the Party Club***

The advantage of the party club is that you and the other councilors from your party can share the council’s workload, which makes the work for every councilor member more

manageable. The chair of the party club should allocate responsibilities to all members of the club. It is important not to leave anyone out! Do not centralize all responsibility with one or two members. Develop “expert” councilors on specific issues to expand the expertise of the club. Also ensure that every council member is active and ready to speak at council meetings on those areas for which they have responsibility.

A well-run party club requires that all of its members work together to “organize and maintain” a functioning organization. Do not think, “Because we all belong to the same party we will all work well together and agree on the same issues!” Coordination and consensus on club positions and strategies require time, work and personal investment.

### ***Club Meetings***

The party club should organize meetings independently from the council session. On average, two meetings between council sessions may be sufficient. One meeting should be used to prepare political strategies and broader positions, such as those topics or issues you want to put on the agenda of the council session. The second meeting should be used to prepare for the council session itself and to eliminate or reduce last minute obstacles. If two meetings are too much, try to agree on a regularly scheduled planning meeting between council sessions.

The club meeting should be a closed political meeting where the representatives from the same party discuss and decide their position in line with the party’s program and political strategy. These closed party club meetings should encourage an open, frank and democratic discussion about the issues at hand and should be used to develop a consensus for the position and common strategy the political party will take within the council.

### ***Club Policy***

As a rule, party club meetings should allow for political disagreement within the confines of a closed meeting. However, once a decision is reached all members should publicly support the decision of the club. This is the key for the operation of an effective party club.

## **TYPES OF PARTY CLUBS**

Your party club may function differently depending on the number of your party members on the council as well as whether your party is part of the governing coalition or the opposition.

### ***One or Two Member Party Clubs***

One or two member party clubs are relatively easy to organize. Although small in terms of the number of members, this kind of club still has an important job. It must work to ensure that its party's positions and its concerns about the government are heard by the council and the public. The club must also work to keep its party and local branch offices active and involved. To accomplish these tasks, the club must coordinate and plan its actions and initiatives.

In order to maximize its resources and effectiveness, this kind of party club should limit its political activity to those issues where the party's voters have a specific interest. Do not try to become an expert on all of the issues the council will discuss but select those topics that will strengthen your party's profile. Maintain regular contact with your party's councilors from neighboring municipalities and counties as well as party leadership. Working in a coordinated effort with neighboring councils on a common issue often gets more attention from the press and the public than the singular efforts of one or two councilors.

### ***Majority Clubs/Clubs in the Governing Coalition***

When your party has the majority or participates in the governing coalition, you automatically have the tools to work with the executive members to implement your plans and ideas. But if your party is a partner in a majority coalition, you may have to walk a fine line between your own party profile and the coalition agreement. It is a good idea for coalition partners to create coalition agreements that define how work should be done within the council. As the coalition works within the council, each member party should appreciate and understand the need for every coalition party to "score" on policy issues that are very important to them.

The key to a stable coalition is timely and extensive communication. It is easier to build consensus on priority issues if coalition partners talk amongst themselves. For example, it is important to discuss significant political issues and try to reach consensus with all of the majority coalition members before you start public debate with the opposition.

After the post election period, many majority party clubs forget that they must develop a policy agenda for their council work. If the party club does not act, the administration will “steer” the agenda. Each majority club should plan a political course for the following four years and annually establish a new set of objectives.

### ***Opposition Clubs***

The role of the opposition club is important but can be frustrating, as normally the governing side does not want to hear what the opposition has to say. The party club in opposition is responsible for making sure the government works in everyone’s best interests, and it must continuously work to express its party’s position on the plans of the government. The work of the party club, through its strategies, questions, proposals and recommendations, puts limits on the potential for undemocratic governance.

As an opposition club you should present alternatives to government policies. Developing and presenting policy proposals different from the ones of the governing coalition is an important task for all opposition councilors and their clubs. By doing so, you provide citizens with a democratic choice!

In order to do its necessary work, the party club must gain a solid understanding of the rules and procedures that direct the operation of the government. The better the club knows and understands the law, the easier it can obligate the government and its majority to operate within the framework of the law. The opposition club must also work to ensure that the council is open to public input and discussion. Finally, the club must work to keep the party and local branch offices active and involved. For example, presenting the club’s functioning, distributed responsibilities and action plans to the party branch,

leadership or membership, will help to strengthen the link between common party members and you as an elected representative.

### **EFFECTIVE CLUB OPERATION**

The keys for effective and productive work in a party club are:

- ❖ Communication
- ❖ Ensuring that the entire party club knows what party representatives are doing in council committees as well as on boards and commissions
- ❖ Delegation of tasks and responsibilities

### ***A Job for Everyone***

The club leader cannot do everything! Don't consolidate all of the responsibility in the hands of a few people. The club should work as a team, where experienced and new members share the work and build together the options and the positions that they will take. It is important to ensure that new club members receive from the beginning specific roles and responsibilities. They should be given an opportunity to prove themselves and get involved productively in the club work.

### ***Internal Democracy***

Use of the democratic process within a party club consists of more than just obtaining a majority vote. It also consists of regular debate, during which care is taken to ensure that all views have been expressed and weighed against each other. Use of the democratic process within a club is also an opportunity to build long-term cohesion within the club and the loyalty of club members.

### ***Expectations***

It should be clear at the outset what a party club expects from each of its members. Remember the saying: *podrazumijevanje = nerazumijevanje* (implicitness = lack of comprehension). Unexpressed expectations are often the reason small resentments grow into bigger problems. If expected commitments are clearly stated and understood by all club members, it is easier for everyone to meet his or her responsibilities and obligations.

### ***Evaluation***

Time should be planned and scheduled for club members to evaluate the work of the party club. An opportunity should be created once or twice a year to meet outside the council meeting agenda in a less stressful atmosphere to review club policies and distribute tasks and responsibilities. These meetings are also an opportunity to prepare a presentation on the club's work for the annual party congress. In addition to the work of the club, the presentation should highlight the specific contributions made by each councilor.

### ***Building a Network***

Some of the best resources for ideas and suggestions are the local councilors from your party that are active in other municipalities and counties. Ask your party to organize communication between councilors from the same region. Build a network among your party councilors – ask each councilor for their name, telephone number and e-mail address. Encourage everyone within the network to share and discuss common topics and problems, as well as their success stories of party actions and council work. Your party club and your council could benefit from this wealth of experience. The network can also be used to undertake simultaneous actions on an issue that is a party priority in all local councils. These coordinated actions will get the attention of the media and the public.

Your party may have someone at the headquarters level whose task is to assist and develop communication among your party's local councilors. You should communicate your successes and lessons learned with this person on a regular basis. In turn, this person will make sure that the other levels of the party – leaders, county organizations, members of parliament – are informed and aware of the work you have done and the progress you have made.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF COALITIONS**

In most local government units, parties have to work together to form a majority that will govern the county, town or municipality. Your political influence and leverage will expand when you learn the methods and tools to negotiate productive, workable and fair agreements. In most cases parties that work towards full control of the council and wait until the voters give them an overall majority lose in the long run. Similarly, those parties and local councilors that are unable or are unwilling to build fair coalition agreements will be avoided in the future by possible coalition partners.

Here are a few suggestions on how to prepare for negotiations and some hints on how to structure a coalition negotiation process.

### **PLANNING A SUCCESSFUL NEGOTIATION**

If your party wants a successful negotiation, you and your party councilors as well as your party branch should go through the following steps together before starting the talks with the coalition partners around the table.

- Ensure that your party's goals and objectives are understood within the party club. What is it that you want to achieve in terms of policy development or addressing specific improvements in the community? What are the concrete aims you have in changing or developing the local administration? Put those things on paper so they become "very clear" for the entire party club. It would be best to use the party's election platform or program as a guide to draft the specific governing programs you want to achieve.
  
- Make a list of what your party believes are the issues and proposals of your negotiation partners. The better you understand the positions, rationale or motivations of your negotiation partners, the easier it will be to find solutions and proposals that can satisfy everyone around the table.

- If you expect difficult negotiations you should think about the “Why” behind the positions and proposals of the parties and people at the negotiation table. Sometimes it is easier to reach consensus on proposals if you can clarify the interest behind it and suggest other proposals that will ensure that all interests are protected.
- When working on tough issues, develop a set of suggestions that can be proposed as a compromise during the negotiations. Often the party that has prepared a list of compromise suggestions will have a greater chance of reaching compromises that they can work with.
- Refer to other concrete examples in the country or elsewhere and develop objective criteria that can be used to build consensus among the partners. Often your policy suggestions have been implemented with success somewhere else in Croatia or in another country. Make sure you have those examples on hand to show that you are not asking for “dream solutions” but effective policies that are already in place and working.
- It would be very useful to hold a round of consultations with special interest groups, NGOs and other civic organizations in the municipality to hear their concrete suggestions for the new governing coalition agenda. This would help build legitimacy for the coalition by allowing organizations and groups to have input in the policy decision-making process. These groups have expertise in their respective subject areas, so you could gather ideas, some of which could be completely new. This round of consultations could be the first step in the negotiation process, ensuring a discussion based on proposed programs, real issues and achievable solutions.

### *The Negotiating Attitude*

When it comes to your negotiating behavior, understand that you will have more of a chance for success if you treat the parties around the table as “partners”. Try to identify and build policies on which you can work together cooperatively. Remember to allow your partners a fair deal. In the end, they need to have an agreement they can sell to their party and voters. If it looks as if they have compromised too much, the agreement will not hold the coalition together.

### **THE COALITION NEGOTIATION PROCESS**

A negotiation process is necessary to build a coalition based on a strong foundation. The process must cover all of the essential areas the coalition partners will need for working together in the future. In several countries political parties have used a negotiation process with clear responsibilities, schedules and goals to assist in the discussions among the coalition members. A negotiation plan follows which could be used as a guide for your party’s negotiation efforts:

### *The Plan*

First, a plan is necessary to ? move ? the negotiation through the necessary process. As part of the plan it would be advisable for all of the parties around the table to agree upon and appoint one person or a team of persons as moderators. This team would be responsible for the “negotiation process”. Often the candidate mayor and his future deputy play the role of moderators. However there are examples where parties agree to use, as moderators, individuals who will not take a position in the new government. Moderators are often a useful tool for building trust among coalition partners. The role of the moderators in the negotiation will be to draft and suggest compromises, policy documents and agreements. Although in many cases the moderators are politicians with a specific party background, their primary task is to give the necessary time and attention to the negotiation process and to keep it moving. Representing and negotiating for their particular party’s positions is the role of the parties’ negotiation teams.

### *The Negotiation Agenda*

Secondly, a complete agenda for the coalition agreement must be created by the coalition partners. The moderators should have the task of drafting such a document using the ideas and suggestions from community organizations and the party programs of the coalition partners. A first draft of the document will serve as the basis for negotiation and will be amended during the negotiation process. During the negotiation, moderators should summarize the agreements reached as well as develop and propose compromises to advance the negotiation. Often they will look for win-win situations where all partners can find some of their agenda in the final product. At minimum, the following three subjects must be discussed and agreed upon by the coalition members.

#### 1) Financial and Budget Policies

- The long-term financial and budgetary policy framework for the life of the coalition must be discussed, negotiated and agreed upon. The questions the coalition partners must think through include but are not limited to the following:
  - How to deal with a budget deficit and how fast can you reach a balanced budget?
  - What major investments are planned during the governing tenure?
  - Will taxes be lowered or increased?
- Working on this framework at the start of the coalition provides for easier year-to-year budget negotiations.

#### 2) Policy Agreements for All Sectors of the Government

- There must be coalition policy agreements for all sectors within the local government. The agreements should cover transportation, urban or rural planning, waste and trash collection, social affairs, schools and education, environmental protection and policies toward women, youth and pensioners, among others. The

negotiators should draft clear and concise sets of policies for these areas. These policies will guide the different members of the cabinet in the day-to-day implementation of their work. Although each councilor will work on and look at issues through their own party glasses, they will all be bound to implement and execute programs in compliance with coalition policies. The agreements will also serve to keep the government and its cabinet accountable to the agreed upon policies.

### 3) Distribution of Responsibilities and Duties

- Assign names or parties to the different jobs and responsibilities within the government cabinet and administration. In many cases this is the part of the negotiation process that is the best known, as the general public tends to believe that politicians are only interested in positions. Although no party should veto the candidates of the other coalition partners, when selecting its candidates, each party should be aware of the “team spirit” needed to ensure success as a coalition.

### ***Involvement of Coalition Parties in Negotiations***

Thirdly, a procedure must be developed to determine a balance between the effectiveness of the process and the involvement of coalition parties. A possible solution is to appoint small negotiation teams that will have the responsibility of making the decisions on compromises for priority political issues. Smaller negotiation teams could also be created to work on each of the policy sectors of the agreement. This resolution would be an effective tool for including additional members of the parties in the decision making process (more than the typical four or five) and would also be useful in building among the different parties the consensus necessary for the final coalition agreement.

## **DISCUSSION AND RATIFICATION OF THE COALITION AGREEMENT**

Finally, it is very important to provide the time for each party to discuss and accept the complete coalition agreement. The negotiators that prepared the agreement will probably defend the results they have reached, but only the parties, with input from their members, should make the decision to consent to the terms of the agreement and to enter the coalition.

## **PUBLICIZING YOUR COALITION AGREEMENT**

There is nothing secret about your vision for your government and the concrete policies on which your coalition will work. Your voters should understand that you made compromises with other coalition partners, and were not able to get all of your ideas in the final agreement. By making the coalition agreement available to the public, members of the community can see how their individual votes resulted in a concrete policy plan. In addition, your civil society partners will be enthused to find some of their ideas mentioned. Some ways to make your coalition agreement freely available include posting it on the municipality website or publishing it in the local newspaper.

## **CREDITS/ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This manual was written by the NDI/Croatia Team:

Johan Hamels

Alan Sisinacki

Karen Gainer

Sarah H. Jenkins

Amy Gray

Natalija Bukovec

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The NDI Guyana Team’s “Building Effective Local Governance, A Guide for Local Councillors,” National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (1995)

“Understanding Local Government and How to Develop Citizen Participation Programs that Will Strengthen it as a Democratic Institution,” Wallace Rogers, Local Government Consultant (1997)

“Local Government: A Councillor’s Guide 1995/96,” The Local Government Management Board of the UK (1995)

Ulrich Bohner, Deputy Chief Executive of the Congress, Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe.

## APPENDIX I

### **WHAT IS A COUNCIL?**

The Croatian government system is a three-tiered system comprised of a central government, counties and municipalities/towns. The counties are units of regional self-government while municipalities and towns are units of local self-government. Local government units come in all shapes and sizes, from under 100 residents to almost one million. As of 2001, Croatia has 20 counties, 121 towns and 423 municipalities. There are approximately 8,500 elected councilors in local and county councils. These councilors are elected for a period of four years. While they are not paid a salary, they receive an honorarium for each session.

The number of councilors in local councils differs according to the size of local communities they represent:

- ❖ Municipalities up to 3,000 inhabitants have from 7 to 13 councilors;
- ❖ Municipalities ranging from 3,001 to 10,000 inhabitants have from 9 to 15 councilors;
- ❖ Municipalities and towns ranging from 10,001 to 30,000 inhabitants have from 13 to 19 councilors;
- ❖ Towns with more than 30,001 inhabitants have from 19 to 35 councilors;
- ❖ Counties have from 31 to 51 councilors; and
- ❖ The City of Zagreb has 51 councilors because of its dual status as city and county.

There are five laws that define the system and structure of local government in Croatia:

- ❖ Constitution of the Republic of Croatia
- ❖ Law on Territories of Counties, Towns and Municipalities
- ❖ Law on the City of Zagreb
- ❖ Law on Local and Regional Self-Government
- ❖ Law on Election of Members of Local and Regional Self-Government Representative Bodies.

The local government financial powers are stipulated in the *Law on Financing of Local and Regional Self-Government*. There are also many other laws that define revenue sources and obligations of local governments in balancing public services. The Department for Local Self-Government at the Ministry of Justice, Administration and Local Self-Government is the place to get more information. Do not hesitate to get in contact with them and to ask questions:

Department for Local Self-Government  
Ministry of Justice, Administration and Local Self-Government  
Ul. Republike Austrije 14  
10000 Zagreb

Department Tel: 01/3782-182  
Department Fax: 01/3782-192  
Ministry Tel: 01/3710-666, 3782-111

## APPENDIX II

### **THE BUDGET PROCESS**

#### *The Budget Cycle*

The budget cycle consists of four phases, lasting 25 months; for example, the budget for the year 2003 was created as follows:

- I. *April – October 2002*: Planning and preparation of the budget, this task was done by the local government office.
- II. *October – December 2002*: Budget discussion and adoption. In this phase there is an opportunity for public involvement in the budget discussion.
- III. *January – December 2003*: Budget is implemented.
- IV. *January – May 2004*: Final record is completed and the result of the previous budget year is known.

#### *Financial Reports*

Major financial reports from the budget are:

##### *Balance Sheet*

- ❖ Indicates the current assets and liabilities of your local government.
- ❖ Static picture of what is owned and owed by your government on December 31 of a given year.

##### *Revenue and Expenditure Accounts*

- ❖ Lists all the income for the local or county government unit such as local taxes, transfers from the national government and fees paid for services.
- ❖ Identifies all costs expected to be incurred during the following year: salaries, working costs, investments, interests on loans and transfers of funds. Generally each of these costs will be indicated department by department.

##### *Consolidated Balance of Capital Assets*

- ❖ Gives an estimate of the value of buildings, cars and other major property owned by your local or county governmental unit.

### *Borrowing Account*

- ❖ Identifies the outstanding loans of the unit that have to be repaid.

### *Budget Notes*

The most important budget tool for the councilor is the set of notes that accompany the budget. This information should answer many of your questions. Ask the government to provide the budget notes in a language that the average citizen can read and understand. If the notes are written only for bookkeepers and accountants then the information provided can be difficult to use by the average councilor. In addition, clear and understandable notes are important if you want the public's input in the debate on the budget.

### APPENDIX III

## **European Code of Conduct For the Political Integrity of Local and Regional Elected Representatives**

### Preamble

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe,

Stressing that local and regional elected representatives carry out their duties within the framework of the law and in accordance with the mandate given to them by the electorate and that they are accountable to the whole of the local or regional population, including those electors who did not vote for them;

Considering that respect for the electorate's mandate goes hand in hand with respect for ethical standards;

Deeply concerned by the increase in the number of judicial scandals involving political representatives who have committed offences while in office and noting that local and regional elected representatives are not above such offences;

Convinced that the promotion of codes of conduct for local and regional elected representatives will allow trust to be built up between local and regional politicians and citizens;

Convinced that a relationship of trust is indispensable for elected representatives to be able to perform their role effectively;

Noting that legislation is more and more frequently supplemented by codes of conduct in various areas such as commercial relations, banking relations and administration;

Believing that it is the duty of local and regional elected representatives to take similar steps in their various areas of responsibility;

Convinced that a definition, in the form of a code of conduct, of the ethical obligations of local and regional elected representatives will clarify their role and duties and reaffirm the importance of those duties;

Convinced that such a code must encompass as fully as possible all the work done by elected representatives;

Stressing that rules of conduct imply those ethical imperatives must be respected;

Pointing out that the whole of civil society must be involved in restoring a climate of confidence and stressing the role of the citizens themselves and the media in this respect;

Reasserting that obligations cannot be imposed without guarantees being granted to enable local and regional elected representatives to fulfil their duties and recalling in this respect the relevant provisions of the European Charter of Local Self-Government and the Draft European Charter of Regional Self-Government;

Taking into consideration the legislation currently in force in member countries and the relevant work being done at international level, proposes the following Code of Conduct for the Political Integrity of Local and Regional Elected Representatives:

## ***I – SCOPE***

### Article 1 – Definition of an elected representative

For the purposes of this Code, the term “elected representative” means any politician holding a local or regional authority mandate conferred through a principal election (election by direct suffrage) or secondary election (election to executive office by the local or regional council).

### Article 2 – Definition of functions

For the purposes of this Code, the term “functions” means a principal or secondary elective mandate and all functions performed by an elected representative under that mandate.

### Article 3 - Object of the code

The object of this Code is to specify the standards of behaviour expected of elected representatives in the performance of their duties and to inform citizens of the standards of behaviour that they have a right to expect of their elected representatives.

## ***II – GENERAL PRINCIPLES***

### Article 4 - Primacy of law and the public interest

Elected representatives hold office under the law and must at all times act in accordance with the law.

In performing their functions, elected representatives shall serve the public interest and not exclusively their direct or indirect personal interest or the private interest of individuals or groups of individuals with the aim of deriving direct or indirect personal benefit therefrom.

### Article 5 – Objectives of fulfilling a mandate

Elected representatives shall undertake to perform their functions with diligence, openness and a willingness to account for their decisions.

### Article 6 – Constraints of fulfilling a mandate

In performing their functions, elected representatives shall respect the powers and prerogatives of all other political elected representative and all public employees.

They shall not encourage or help any other political representative or any public employee to breach the principles set forth herein when performing their functions.

## ***III - SPECIFIC OBLIGATIONS***

### ***1. Taking of Office***

#### Article 7 – Rules governing election campaigns

Candidates' election campaigns shall aim to provide information and explanations on their political programmes.

Candidates shall not seek to secure votes by any means other than persuasive argumentation and debate.

In particular, they shall not attempt to obtain votes by slandering other candidates, by the use of violence and/or threats, by tampering with electoral rolls and/or the results of the ballot or by granting or promising favours.

### ***2. Holding of Office***

#### Article 8 – Ban on favouring

Elected representatives shall not perform their functions or use the prerogatives of their office in the private interest of individuals or groups of individuals, with the aim of deriving a direct or indirect personal benefit therefrom.

#### Article 9 – Ban on exercising authority to one's own advantage

Elected representatives shall not perform their functions or use the prerogatives of their office to further their own direct or indirect private or personal interests.

#### Article 10 – Conflict of interests

When elected representatives have a direct or indirect personal interest in matters being examined by local or regional councils or by executive bodies, they shall undertake to make those interests known before deliberations are held and a vote is taken.

Elected representatives shall abstain from any deliberation or vote on a question in which they have a direct or indirect personal interest.

#### Article 11 – Limit on concurrent holding of two or more appointments

Elected representatives shall comply with any regulations in force aimed at limiting the concurrent holding of two or more political appointments.

Elected representatives shall not hold other political appointments where this prevents them from performing their functions as an elected representative.

Nor shall they have or hold functions, elective mandates, occupations or official appointments which entail supervision of their own functions as an elected representative or which they themselves are supposed to supervise in their capacity as an elected representative.

#### Article 12 – Exercise of discretionary powers

In exercising their discretionary powers, elected representatives shall not grant themselves any direct or indirect personal advantage, or grant any individual or group of individuals an advantage with the aim of deriving a direct or indirect personal benefit therefrom.

Detailed grounds shall be given for any decision, specifying all the factors on which the decision is based, in particular the applicable rules and regulations, and showing how the decision complies with those rules and regulations.

Failing any rules and regulations, the grounds for the decision shall include elements such as to show its proportionality, fairness and conformity with the public interest.

#### Article 13 – Ban on corruption

In performing their functions, elected representatives shall refrain from any conduct qualifying, under the national or international criminal law in force, as active or passive bribery.

#### Article 14 - Observation of budgetary and financial discipline

Elected representatives shall undertake to observe budgetary and financial discipline, which guarantees the proper management of public money, as defined by the relevant national legislation.

In fulfilling their duties, elected representatives shall not do anything to misappropriate public funds and/or grants. They shall not do anything that might lead to public funds and/or grants being used for direct or indirect personal purposes.

### **3. *Relinquishing of Office***

#### **Article 15 – Ban on securing certain appointments**

In performing their functions, elected representatives shall not take any measure such as to grant themselves a future personal professional advantage once they have relinquished their functions:

- In public or private bodies over which they exercised supervision while performing those functions;
- In public or private bodies with which they established a contractual relationship while performing those functions;
- In public or private bodies which were set up during their term of office and by virtue of the powers entrusted to them.

## ***IV – MEANS OF SUPERVISION***

### **1. *Taking of Office***

#### **Article 16 – Limitation and declaration of campaign expenses**

Candidates shall keep their spending on election campaigns in proportion and within reasonable limits.

They shall diligently comply with any measure under the regulations in force requiring the source and amount of the income which they devote to campaign financing and the nature and amount of their spending to be made public.

Failing regulations in force on the subject, they shall provide this information simply on request.

### **2. *Holding of Office***

#### **Article 17 – Declaration of interests**

Elected representatives shall diligently comply with any measure under the regulations in force requiring their direct or indirect personal interests, their other mandates, functions or occupations, or changes in their assets to be made public or monitored.

Failing regulations on the subject, they shall provide this information simply on request.

#### Article 18 – Compliance with internal and external supervisory measures

In performing their functions, elected representatives shall not hinder the implementation of any supervisory measure which the relevant internal or external authorities may, with due justification and openness, choose to take.

They shall diligently comply with any immediately enforceable or final decision by those authorities.

When giving grounds for their acts or decisions subject to such supervision, they shall expressly mention the existence of the supervisory measures and specify the authorities competent for implementing them.

### ***V – RELATIONS WITH THE PUBLIC***

#### Article 19 – Publishing and giving grounds for decisions

Elected representatives shall be accountable to the whole of the local population throughout their mandate.

Elected representatives shall give detailed grounds for any decision which they take, specifying all the factors on which the decision is based, in particular the applicable rules and regulations, and showing how the decision complies with those rules and regulations.

Where that information is confidential, the reasons for such confidentiality shall be explained.

Elected representatives shall diligently respond to any request from the public concerning the performance of their functions, the grounds for their action, or the functioning of the services and departments coming under their responsibility.

They shall encourage and promote any measure which fosters openness concerning their powers, the exercise of those powers and the functioning of the services and departments coming under their responsibility.

### ***VI – RELATIONS WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT STAFF***

#### Article 20 - Appointments

Elected representatives shall undertake to prevent any appointment of administrative staff based on principles other than recognition of merit and professional abilities and/or for purposes other than the needs of the department.

In matters of staff appointments or promotions, elected representatives shall take an objective, reasoned decision, showing due diligence.

#### Article 21 – Respect for the role of local government staff

In performing their functions, elected representatives shall show respect for the role of the local government staff reporting to them, without prejudice to the legitimate exercise of their hierarchical authority.

They shall not ask or require public employees to take or omit to take any measure such as to give themselves a direct or indirect personal advantage or give an advantage to individuals or groups of individuals with the aim of deriving direct or indirect personal benefit therefrom.

#### Article 22 – Promotion of the role of local government staff

In performing their functions, elected representatives shall ensure that the role and tasks of the local government employees reporting to them are promoted to the full.

They shall encourage and promote any measure which fosters improvements in the operating performance of the services or departments coming under their responsibility and the motivation of the staff concerned.

### ***VII – RELATIONS WITH THE MEDIA***

#### Article 23

Elected representatives shall respond diligently, honestly and fully to any request from the media for information concerning the performance of their functions but shall not provide any confidential information or information concerning the private lives of elected representatives or third parties.

They shall encourage and promote any measure which fosters media coverage of their powers, the performance of their functions and the functioning of the services and departments coming under their responsibility.

### ***VIII – INFORMATION, DISSEMINATION AND AWARENESS-RAISING***

#### Article 24 – Dissemination of the code to elected representatives

Elected representatives shall undertake to ensure that they have read and understood all of the provisions of this code and the regulations referred to herein, and shall declare that they are willing to be guided by the provisions of the code.

Article 25 – Dissemination of the code to the public, local government staff and the media

Elected representatives shall encourage and promote any measure which fosters dissemination of this code to the staff reporting to them, the public and the media, and which heightens those persons' awareness of the principles contained herein.

## ATTACHMENT 3

### MEETING NOTES

#### **LIBRA (Party of Liberal Democrats)**

Tuesday, October 12<sup>th</sup>

Party: Mr. Jozo Rados (president) and Mr. Mladen Ruzman (secretary general)

NDI: Karen, Rob, Andrew, Victoria

NDI met with the president and secretary general of LIBRA, a small liberal party negotiating its merger with the Croatian People's Party (HNS). One of the first parties to sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with NDI in 1997, LIBRA's leaders stated that the party – along with other political parties in Croatia – was much more modern due to NDI's programming. The positive discussion centered on two areas where the party felt NDI had been most helpful: first, developing the leadership skills of senior officials within the party; and second, building the skills of lower-level officials in LIBRA's field branches, which helped to create a second line of political elites. Mr. Jozo Rados, the president, appreciated NDI's presence "everywhere" and noted in particular the enthusiastic and direct approach taken by NDI staff.

Recognizing the long-term and difficult nature of this work, the party cited areas that still need improvement, such as internal democracy and developing strong political values. The party leader suggested convening regional meetings for comparative analysis, providing party leaders with similar challenges to have direct contact and share their experiences.

#### **Croatian Peasant Party (HSS)**

Wednesday, October 13<sup>th</sup>

Party: Mr. Stanko Grcic (secretary general)

NDI: Karen, Rob, Mica, Victoria

HSS leaders expressed sincere sadness at NDI's departure from Croatia and gratitude for the many ways in which NDI's assistance benefited the party. Above all, party leaders viewed NDI as not just a provider of formal assistance, but as a trusted partner who could share informal advice and suggestions. In the secretary general's opinion, NDI "has always been pre-emptive to our mistakes". The party enjoyed NDI's interactive and dynamic training methodology – "[members] learned and were not even aware of it" – and found that with NDI's assistance, HSS field and headquarters staff both changed positively. In a traditional party reluctant to change, the vice president of the HSS caucus credited NDI with helping to develop a broader infrastructure, most successfully at the municipal and county levels.

Unfortunately, the conservative roots of the party prevented the HSS from implementing NDI's advice as much as it would have liked. Though the HSS worked with NDI for many years, the party is just now ready to reform internal party structures. Secretary General Stanko Grcic expressed disappointment at his party's inability to absorb or accept NDI suggestions in this area. HSS spokesperson Marijana Petir concurred, stating that the party needs to become internally democratic, with particular focus on the party's internal communication process. If

NDI remained operational in Croatia, the party would also have liked to learn more about understanding voters' concerns, dealing effectively with the media, and conducting a public relations campaign to "show off" the party's accomplishments.

Mr. Grcic found it difficult to single out one or two key successes, but noted NDI's partnership with the HSS on training local elected officials to conduct a campaign. This model, in which training was organized and conducted by both NDI and the HSS, is one that NDI should look to for future programming.

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**Ms. Marijana Petir (HSS spokesperson; former MP)**

Thursday, October 14<sup>th</sup>

NDI: Karen, Rob, Victoria

To Marijana Petir, NDI was not just a straightforward training organization, it was a partner with whom she could talk openly and trust. NDI's understanding of local politics ensured that no time was wasted explaining the political context. Further, NDI did not push specific policies or ideologies onto the party. In her opinion, the party needs to work much more on internal democracy, specifically communication. The model of producing training sessions along with the party, as was used in training local councilors, is one that NDI should look to for future programming.

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**Ms. Ljubica Lalic (vice president of the HSS Caucus)**

Tuesday, October 12<sup>th</sup>

NDI: Karen, Rob, Mica, Victoria

NDI's meeting with Ljubica Lalic of the Peasant Party reflected the same positive tone as in other discussions with HSS leaders. The deputy chair of the party expressed her sadness at NDI's impending departure and stated that the party was "losing our right hand". She credited NDI with helping to develop a broader infrastructure in a party that is quite traditional and therefore reluctant to change. NDI most touched the party at the municipal and county levels.

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**Social Democratic Party of Croatia (SDP)**

Wednesday, October 13<sup>th</sup>

Party: Mr. Igor Dragovan (secretary general), Mr. Zlatko X (executive board), Mr. Milan Zivkovic (marketing director)

NDI: Rob, Karen, Mica, Megan, Victoria

One of NDI's key partners, the SDP enjoyed a strong relationship with NDI since the program's establishment in Croatia. SDP party leaders expressed appreciation of NDI's work over the last several years, and displayed a deep understanding of the role of democratic political parties. It became clear that the party adopted NDI's language as its own, citing the importance of local branches' creativity and initiative; improving two-way communication between the party headquarters and branches; and remaining in regular contact with citizens. In particular, the SDP mentioned NDI's focus on building skills and knowledge in the field, which has positively

changed how the party creates more informed strategy and develops issue-based campaigns. Other key activities included the successful introduction of the UK Labour Party to the SDP.

In the next election, the SDP hopes to avoid repeating previous mistakes – such as ceasing to communicate regularly with voters while in power from 2000 to 2003. They plan to further strengthen the branch-headquarters relationship and develop a more inclusive and locally driven policy process, looking to the Labour Party for guidance. Unlike other parties in Croatia, the SDP is known as having women in leadership positions, but will work more on promoting women’s issues, like healthcare and day care, in local government.

Friday, October 8<sup>th</sup>

Party: Mr. Mato Arlovic (Deputy Speaker of the *Sabor*)

NDI: Karen, Mica, Megan

Mr. Arlovic expressed gratitude for all the work NDI has done to help the SDP improve its internal party communication structures. He stated that he thought it was too early for NDI to leave Croatia, as there is still work to be done, especially in the *Sabor*. NDI informed Mr Arlovic that the Institute is still operating in neighboring countries and would like to keep ties with him.

### **Independent Serb Democratic Party (SDSS)**

Wednesday, October 13<sup>th</sup>

Party: Mr. Vojislav Stanimirovic (Party President) and second MP

NDI: Karen, Rob, Mica, Victoria

The SDSS discussion focused less on NDI’s involvement and more on the difficult political situation of the Serbian minority in Croatia. The members of parliament present, however, were thankful to NDI’s work and stated that it was very important for their community. Unlike other organizations that the SDSS felt tried to shortcut the process, NDI helped to tackle the problem. Like other parties, NDI’s enthusiasm and support provided much encouragement.

### **Croatian People’s Party (HNS)**

Thursday, October 14<sup>th</sup>

Party: Ms. Vesna Pusic (Party President), Srecko Ferencak (secretary general) and others

NDI: Karen, Rob, Antonio, Victoria

In this informal luncheon discussion, Ms. Vesna Pusic, leader of the HNS, spoke of NDI’s great value to her party. In her opinion, democratic practices were internalized not just at the leadership level, but also as part of the political culture. Evidence of NDI’s success is found in the adoption of NDI manuals as the party’s own, which allow lessons to be passed to new generations of party officials. The secretary general stated that he “just looked at the manuals and followed”.





# **FINAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENT PROGRAM  
& OTHER ACTIVITIES**

*May 2002 – July 2004*

## PARLIAMENT PROGRAM

Initiated in 2000, GONG Parliament program was a constructive contributor to changes in Croatian parliamentary life. It consisted of encouraging citizens and their elected representatives to develop communication, opening Parliament to the public, initiating first internship program in Croatia, and pushing various initiatives for legislation improvement, accountability, information flow and civil society development. Combined, these efforts accomplished much more than it would have been done just by conducting one of them. Moreover, one project's impact on others was significant – e.g. MPs who took part in Internship program were more than glad to attend GONG “Citizens’ Hours” and were often GONG’s voice and help in various initiatives. By being consistent, professional and constructive, GONG managed to build relationships with state institutions (primarily Parliament) and started to be seen as a serious NGO.

GONG succeeded in changing the Parliament from inside. Parliament’s “Golden Coat of Arms” award GONG received in 2003 for development of parliamentary life is a proof of it.

### 1. “Citizens’ Hour” [citizens meeting their elected representatives]

“Citizens’ Hours” were initiated in order to strengthen citizens’ direct communication with their elected representatives on all levels.

Between May 2002 and June 2004, GONG organized **383 “Citizens’ Hours” – 133 open panel discussions and 250 live radio talk shows**. The number of guests present at “Citizens’ Hours” were **1 094**, coming from various state institutions, national and local government, NGOs, media, unions and private sector. GONG is proud to say that President of the Republic of Croatia was guest on seven “Citizens’ Hours” since the creation of the project! More than one hundred MPs attended on “Citizens’ Hours”, several ministers, dozens of town and municipality mayors as well.

**6 421** citizens attended open panel discussions and **883** citizens participated open radio talk shows by giving a phone call and asking questions or giving a comments. Considering the fact that radio talk shows are organized with most popular local radio stations, the number of citizens/beneficiaries could be measured in hundreds of thousands.

“Citizens’ Hours” covered various topics. Special attention was paid to “Citizens’ Hours” regarding election issues (education prior to each national or local election) and encouragement of communication between citizens and their elected representatives in remote municipalities or areas that are dislocated from the state capital or county centers. The most successful “Citizens’ Hours” were the ones that covered burning issues in smaller local communities such as infrastructure development, waste disposals, de-mining, refugee return, housing issues and unemployment.

Over the course of time, we have noticed significant development. In rural and war-affected areas, communication culture has developed and citizens became aware that they deserve and will get answers without arguing and violent behavior. Even GONG was not welcome in certain parts of Croatia. In addition, citizens turned to local and every day topics instead of raising national and political issues. That is worth mentioning since initial “Citizens’ Hours” were very difficult to conduct and in most cases unfruitful. We are pleased to see that circumstances have changed.

GONG regional offices organized “Citizens’ Hours” in all Croatian counties. Since citizens in several larger cities are able to communicate with officials more easily and they have various means of collecting information and solving their problems, GONG concentrated on smaller and rural communities that have not yet developed a sense of accountability or exercising the right to demand accountability.

Guests at “Citizens’ Hours” (especially state and local officials) became more open and available to GONG and citizens as they realized the importance of communication with their constituency – many of them (e.g. MPs) took part in dozens of “Citizens’ Hours” commending

GONG for providing arena for this kind of communication. Now days, guests invited very rarely decline invitation and a lot of them participate in discussions even though it is sometimes very unpleasant for them, especially when it is about important local issues that are not resolved. Local officials and representatives became aware of their accountability and citizens expect them to be available for public discussion. In addition, citizens begun to invite GONG to organize panels on certain issues (e.g. in Sarvas on traffic problems, in Gracac on housing issues, in Dvor on land registers issue). Several "Citizens' Hours" resulted in immediate discussions on town/municipality councils and problems were resolved (e.g. in Dubrovnik on waste disposal, in Zadar on student dormitory). Most importantly, citizens were introduced to persons who are in charge for certain areas of national and local government and became aware of procedure in order to push and resolve their problems. None of this was the case at the project's begging.

Still, several things emerged, that should be addressed in the future: "Citizens' Hours" covering election topics shown to be less attractive to citizens, so GONG will decrease the number of these or reorganize the way they were held; GONG will concentrate on areas where communication habits are still not developed; special attention will be paid to "Citizens' Hours" organized as follow up in order to monitor the development of certain issues.

*The list of all "Citizens' Hours" held between May 2002 and July 2004 is in Addendum I.*

*Detailed description of all "Citizens' Hours" could be found on "Quarterly reports" CD-ROM*

## 2. GONG Internships

After initial ban from the Parliament in 2000, the Presidency of the Parliament officially recognized Internship program in Croatian Parliament on April 10, 2001, which enabled students and young professionals to volunteer for MPs within the first internship program in Croatia. Since then, 42 students took part in the Program and worked as volunteers for 33 MPs. After request coming from the Government, at the end of 2001, students begun to volunteer in several Croatian Government departments. Since the beginning of the project, eight students volunteered in Government departments. On local level, eight students volunteered in local representative or executive bodies.

Since the beginning of the project, **57 students** volunteered as interns in Croatian Parliament, Government and on local levels.

The evolution of the program was quite interesting. GONG effort to initiate first Internship program in Croatia was completely ignored by the Parliament. Thus, first group of interns started their internships with MPs that were willing to work with students regardless GONG did not receive official permission by the Parliament Presidency. With the help of MPs and further pressure toward the Presidency, we have succeeded in setting up appointments with the Parliament's Chairperson and Secretary, and received official permission in April 2001. However, presence of students in the Parliament was found as annoying and made difficult as much as it could be by the Parliament's staff. Interns could not enter the Parliament without being invited by MPs and they could not use Parliament's resources. After we have managed to initiate cooperation with the Parliament Secretary, situation improved. Secretary gave inputs to our Internship manual, initiated issuing ID cards for interns in order to enable them to enter the Parliament, she even participated to one of our Internship seminars. Official set of rules for interns in the Parliament was delivered and GONG was invited to participate in creating it. In March 2003, GONG interns even started guiding tours of the Parliament within Open Parliament program, which was before done by the Parliament's PR Office. Now, interns are part of Parliament's every day work.

Since the beginning of the project, GONG organized one training and four evaluation/training seminars for interns since the beginning of the project and dozen of MPs and members of Parliament staff participated in those seminars. All interns evaluated the program as a very

good practice experience for their future professional development. MPs stated that it was very valuable experience for them too, because they got valuable help and youth opinion from their interns. All interns who volunteered in the Parliament stated that that program helped them to change their perception of the Parliament as an institution. Before they entered the program, they had negative opinion of the Parliament and its work, but after they got into the institution, they realized that things are much different than they have expected. Interns who completed their internship and were employed, commended the program as one of the most valuable experiences they had and as very helpful in job seeking opportunities. Further development of the Internship program depends on interest of the institutions. MPs fully support it, they even begun to contact GONG stating the need for interns. However, the situation with the Government and on local level is different. Cooperation with the new Government (November 2003) unfortunately decreased and due to the lack of interest coming from the local officials, GONG plans to postpone the program on local level until the interest rise. On the other hand, GONG will put effort on passing the program to institutions that should conduct it – initial agreement has been set up with the Faculty of Political Sciences (University of Zagreb) in order to pass the implementation of the program to its staff, becoming the integral part of high education. GONG will have monitoring and advisory role during this transitional period.

*The list of all interns is in Addendum II.*

### 3. Observing Parliament: How does the Parliament work?

This project was created in order to open Croatian Parliament to citizens, since it was closed to the public until after Parliamentary elections in January 2000 and only media and persons invited by MPs could enter the Parliament. After GONG request, Parliament allowed citizens to observe sessions and to visit their MPs. In cooperation with the MPs and Parliament's staff, GONG started to bring individuals and groups of citizens (mostly high school students) to observe Parliament's work or to participate in "Monday Tours" of the Parliament where they had the opportunity to learn Parliament's history and the way that Parliament works. In the reporting period, GONG organized **129 visits** to the Parliament with **6 538 citizens/students** from all over Croatia participating. Since May 2003, **279** MPs attended on meetings with citizens/students, many of them more than once. They have described the work of MPs and answered to numerous citizens' questions. In addition, they have commended GONG's efforts to organize those visits and thanked for the opportunity to meet the citizens.

From the start of the project (spring 2000) 602 citizens attended Parliamentary sessions and 6 617 citizens visited Parliament as a part of Monday Tours, and 83 schools visited Croatian Parliament one or more times.

At the very beginning, neither citizens nor Parliament's officials considered visits to the Parliament and it being open to the public as positive and natural thing. When we succeeded in bringing first individuals and groups, organizing it were somewhat difficult – it was hard to arrange rooms available, agreed dates were postponed. There were occasions when even MPs complained that citizens' present in the hallways incommode them. Nevertheless, as cooperation with Parliament staff and Presidency developed (as within Internship program), we started to organize visits on regular basis and with no obstacles. MPs got used to see students and citizens, and started communicate with them as much as they could. Since there was a huge interest, especially coming from schools, to visit the Parliament, GONG begun to organize tours not only on Mondays, but also on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. Citizens walking through the Parliament became an every day, normal thing. Now, MPs take every opportunity to meet citizens, especially students – future voters. Students expect as a natural thing to visit the Parliament, and most schools have planned to spend one day in the Parliament. Teachers call GONG to set the date even before we send invitation letters explaining the possibility and inviting them to visit the Parliament.

As intended, GONG plans to pass the project to Parliament's staff in next 2 years. After Parliament delivers rules of procedure and hires staff (or volunteers) for Parliament tours, organization of it will be possible without GONG.

*The list of all groups visited the Parliament within "Monday tours" is in **Addendum III**.*

#### 4. Initiatives

During this reporting period, GONG continuously advocated for election legislation change. Along with Election Package project, advocacy campaigns resulted in raising public awareness and capturing media attention on issues such as campaign financing, state election commission as permanent body, voter's registers and election process.

- Four GONG amendments were adopted among amendments of Election Law, voted by Croatian Parliament on April 2003 session. Amendments, which were presented to all Parliamentary Caucus, refer to protection of voter's rights, shortening of election silence period, use of original D'Hondt method for transferring votes into mandates and determination of obligations for all electronic media during election campaign. Two Parliament's Conclusions were adopted on April 2003 session in which Parliament has obliged Croatian Government to propose to the Parliament within 60 days Law on State Election Commission as Permanent Body and Law on Amendments of Law on Voters Register. However, the Government had not respected these conclusions.
- GONG initiated and drafted Draft Law on State Election Commission as Permanent Body along with senior officials of Ministry of Justice in August 2003. Draft Law has not entered Government's procedure because of the announcement of Parliamentary elections in the autumn 2003.
- During pre-election campaign for Parliamentary elections in 2003, GONG conducted initiatives regarding easier access to voters registers, gave inputs on some Mandatory Instructions of State Election Commission (SEC) as well as on the Manual for Conduct of Elections which was distributed to lower election administration bodies. Upon SEC's approval, GONG produced educative posters for polling places, as a part of election material.
- At the beginning of 2004, GONG was approached by HNS caucus requesting our inputs on Draft Law on Amendments of Law on Elections of Members of Representative Bodies of Local and Regional Self-government. We prepared 16 amendments to the Draft Law, eight of which entered the final text of the Draft Law. It was discussed in the Plenary Session as well as in Committee procedure but was not adopted by the Parliament.
- Thanks to an initiative by GONG, Constitutional Court in spring 2004 annulled certain articles of the two different Election Laws (regulating local and presidential elections), which concerned the protection of voter's rights in the election process, namely, the right to petition. These articles were found unconstitutional by the Court because they granted less right to petition in election process than the Constitutional Law.
- During this period, GONG continued to advocate for transparency of state and local institutions. We completed our initiative for implementation of an article in local bodies' rules and procedures about all their sessions being open to the public by collecting statutes and rules of procedure from local bodies and making an overview of how many of them have included an article on public sessions.

- GONG cooperated since 2002 with the Parliamentary Service for Public Relations on drafting Rules that regulate transparency of work of Croatian Parliament by giving inputs and advocating among MPs for its adoption. Due to the lack of political will, it has not been adopted yet. Along with that, GONG participated in working group for developing content of future Parliament's web page and gave suggestions since May 2002. After one year, new web page with additional content has been released.
- In 2001, GONG undertook a very successful initiative "Novine Narodu" after which public company Narodne Novine d.d. (Publisher of Croatia's Official Gazette) abolished their previous decision to charge for the Internet access to the official state newspaper, leaving the search part to be charged. Therefore, we made our free search engine and put it on our web page. Starting from January 1 2003, public company Narodne Novine d.d. again made available free Gazette searching upon the Government's decision. Following that, in the beginning of 2004 we requested from Narodne Novine d.d. to make all paper content of Croatian Official Gazette ("Narodne Novine") available on the Internet, as many users have contacted GONG requesting that we incite this change. This initiative is still ongoing.
- Each year since 2002 GONG repeatedly requested from the Parliamentary Committee on Constitution, Standing Orders and Political System a public session on submitted annual financial reports from political parties. As there was no positive response, in 2004 we requested to be granted access to all submitted reports, according to a newly adopted Law on Access to Information. We are waiting for the reports to be collected and delivered to GONG.
- During 2002, 2003 and 2004, GONG was involved in civil society legislation development through Government's Office for NGOs, participating in development and presentation of Draft Law on Volunterism. In spring 2004, GONG formed an informal coalition with two other well established NGOs (B.a.B.e. and Zelena akcija) initiating protest against Government's decree to abolish VAT exemption on foreign donations for domestic NGOs. Decree was ranked as harmful to NGOs because it undermined efforts of civil society to establish favorable rules for their financing. However, there was no good faith on the part of the Ministry and the issue has not been resolved, despite the protests of civil society and international community.
- In last two years, GONG received 195 requests for legal advising, mostly concerning elections, finding legal provisions and draft laws, issues on local self-government and civil society development. During 2 months before parliamentary elections 2003, GONG received several thousand questions.

In comparison with the situation just several years ago, GONG has accomplished a lot! Not only by initiating discussions and proposing recommendations, but also in developing constructive cooperation with institutions such as Parliament, ministries, State Election Commission and different Parliament's committees. GONG became a reliable and supportive partner in proposing new rules and legislation. Now days, GONG is invited to committees' discussions, its recommendations are taken into consideration and quoted in plenary sessions and committees' sessions, and it became a partner in drafting new laws.

*Detailed description of all initiatives could be found on "Quarterly reports" CD-ROM*

## OTHER ACTIVITIES

### 1. Election Program

#### Election monitoring and education

Prior to each election in Croatia, GONG conducts its Election activities. Since May 2002, 2 major Election campaigns were held (Parliamentary elections 2003 and Elections for Representatives and Councils of National Minorities in 2003), and numerous educational actions for local and repeated local elections all over Croatia. Approximately **13 500 citizens monitored elections** as independent GONG observers since 1997.

Election campaigns held in this reporting period confirmed GONG's role in civic education and improvement of election process. Recruitment of volunteers for election monitoring showed that citizens find GONG as a serious and reliable independent organization in whom they trust. Feedback from the citizens was very important – not only they called GONG in search for information, but they also viewed GONG as an organization they can trust, that provided assistance and help. In addition, citizens' interest for lawful election conduct increased. More than 13,000 citizens found answers in connection with election rights, voters' lists, and polling stations, just during Parliamentary elections 2003 campaign. Moreover, media recognized GONG as an important actor in election process and being the one that has important information for the public. Conducting its educational campaigns, GONG reached to approximately 80% of population in Croatia and introduced them to their rights and obligations. Not only thanks to valuable support by donators, but also thanks to Croatian Television and other TV and radio stations that recognized the importance of GONG message and aired our video and audio clips more than 6 000 times. In addition, over the last several years, GONG succeeded in creating partnership with State Election Commission - GONG info posters became a part of official election material for polling stations, which was unimaginable just 4 years ago.

Detailed description of all activities undertaken in **GONG election campaigns** could be found on "**Quarterly reports**" **CD-ROM**

#### Election Package

"Election Package" project has been conducted by GONG during one year (April 2002 – April 2003) in the Republic of Croatia. The main goal of the project was to create recommendations for amendment or adoption of five most important laws that regulate legal and technical aspects of election process, in terms of creation of assumptions for building legal framework of election legislation which will be in accordance with European standards: Law on Voters Registers, Law on Political Parties, Law on State Election Commission as a Permanent Body, Law on Financing Election Campaigns and Election Law. GONG has organized five round tables (public discussions) relating to each of the laws mentioned above, gathering experts on election legislation, members of the State Election Commission, judges, members of Parliament, members of political parties, experts for media. Before each round table, GONG had conducted an extensive research on the topic, which included comparative analysis of legal provisions in countries of the European Union and transitional countries. Working groups had been formed for each round table who drafted recommendations as a platform for public discussion. Round tables resulted in adopting recommendations that have been analyzed and presented to the legislative body for their consideration and adoption in election legislative, as well as to other state institutions, political parties, international organizations, experts and the media. In total, 15 experts participated in working groups and 44 guests on round tables. The long-term goal of the Project was creation of quality election

legal framework that regulates all aspects of free and fair elections.

Concrete results in projects such as this one have to be expected in years that are yet to come. However, slight improvement has already been accomplished. "Election package" subjects were not an issue just 4 years ago. Combined with other GONG activities (mostly initiatives), "Election package" helped in putting these issues in the public eye. Voters' registers, Law on financing election campaigns, and Law on political parties became important issues in public discussions on elections, it captured media interest and it became a subject of discussion in the Parliament. Parliament adopted several conclusions and obliged the Government to propose regulations of these laws. Even State Election Commission members (judges) joined GONG in pushing the request for creating a SEC as a permanent body. As an initial step to its realization, now the awareness of the need to adopt these laws exists. A proof of it is the new Law on financing election campaign for Presidential elections adopted in July 2004. Even though it is far from being satisfactory, it is a good start.

### **"I Vote for the First Time"**

"I Vote for the First Time" project started in 2001, aiming at educating high school seniors about their voting right and the rights and duties of an active citizen in civil society. GONG organized more than **2 000 workshops** for **58 000 high school students** all over Croatia. Approximately 70% of all high schools in Croatia recognized the project.

The idea for the project arose in 1999, but when GONG faced indifference and ban coming from the Ministry of education, implementation of it stopped. When the Law on local government and self-government changed, headmasters of high schools were granted with more rights, GONG began to implement pilot workshops in one Croatian region. Even though new Ministry of education did not ban the project, it showed no interest in it. As the project extended to more and more high schools, and after GONG received very positive evaluation by the students and teachers, Ministry finally officially recommended it to all schools. Now days, many teachers count on GONG to conduct "I Vote for the First Time" workshops in their schools and started to reschedule their curriculums so GONG trainers could present elections and public advocacy to their students.

Positive evaluation coming from the students and teachers is the reason why GONG will keep on implementing this project. However, our intention is to incorporate education on elections and civil society into high school curriculums of all schools in Croatia.

*Detailed description of all activities in "I Vote for the First Time" could be found on "Quarterly reports" CD-ROM*

## **2. International Relations**

GONG has conducted many workshops, educational trainings and consultations for similar organizations from this region. Besides election related activities, we also have shared our experiences about our Parliament Program to many interested organizations in South East Europe. Because of these trainings, several organizations initiated projects similar to GONG's in their own countries. MOST successfully started to conduct public debates like "Citizens' Hours", CDT has begun with Internship program and opening their Parliament, ISFED managed to conduct election-monitoring campaign successfully in 2003.

During this reporting period, GONG has trained and consulted following organizations:

- NGO leaders – Russia (2002)
- CCI – Bosnia-Herzegovina (2002)
- CDHRF – Kosovo (2002)
- MOST – Macedonia (2002)

- NGO leaders – Montenegro (2002)
- CDT – Montenegro (2002-2003)
- ISFED – Georgia (2003): assessment visit + consultation + training
- NGO leaders – Belarus (2003)
- NGO representatives – Kosovo (2003)
- NGO representatives – Montenegro (2004)
- NGO leaders – Ukraine (2004)

GONG has monitored elections abroad. Since May 2002, GONG representatives participated in monitoring missions in Montenegro, Slovakia, Latvia, Armenia and Georgia.

Our activists have participated in international educational exchanges and internships in USA, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Germany and Canada.

*Detailed description of all activities undertaken within **International relations program** could be found on “**Quarterly reports**” CD-ROM*

## **ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Since 2000, GONG organizational structure remained the same, except new statutory changes in 2003. GONG is managed by Managing board (consists of five members, GONG employees), supervised by Advisory board (consists of 5 member, not allowed to be GONG employees), and a highest body is an Assembly (all GONG members) that elects members of Managing and Advisory board. GONG has Head office in Zagreb and four regional offices in Rijeka, Slavonski Brod, Zadar and Zagreb. All together, there are 16-20 employees in GONG.

However, the organization has developed significantly over the last few years thanks to internal strengthening, institutional funding and development of programs. GONG became strong, capable of experience sharing, recognizable and respectable organization in Croatia and abroad. GONG became a synonym for independent election monitoring, many organizations from the region contact GONG for trainings and consultations, and institutions and international community find GONG as their partners. GONG cooperates with Croatian institutions – Parliament (Parliament program, initiatives), Ministry of Foreign Affairs (in monitoring election abroad), Ministry of European Integration (various initiatives regarding Croatia’s approach to the EU), Ministry of Justice (legislation amendments, voters’ lists, SEC), local governments (local issues and initiatives, “Citizens’ Hours”), Governmental Office for Cooperation with NGOs (draft law on volunteerism), etc. In addition, we cooperate constructively with international organizations abroad and in Croatia (OSCE, NDI, Freedom House, AED, World Learning, various NGOs, etc.) Besides our project goals, we have successfully taken part in several initiatives that concern civil society development in general (e.g. VAT issue). GONG has representatives in Croatian Council for Civil Society Development and in Croatian Radio-Television Program Council.

*Damir Azenic  
August 2004*

**List of addendums:**

1. Addendum I – List of all “Citizens’ Hours” held between May 2002 and June 2004
2. Addendum II – List of all interns in Internship program
3. Addendum III – List of all groups visited Parliament between May 2002 and June 2004
4. Addendum IV – List of all media appearances since May 2002 (Media report)
5. “Quarterly reports” CD-ROM – a compilation of all quarterly reports from May 2002
6. GONG Annual report for 2002
7. GONG Annual report for 2003