

***An Assessment of USAID Political Party Building and  
Related Activities in Russia***

**Prepared for USAID/Moscow  
Office of Democracy Initiatives and Human Resources**

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## Executive Summary

What Americans must ask is not so much what we can do for Russia, but what can we do with Russia to advance our common interests and lift people in both our nations.

### President Clinton before the Russian State Duma, June 5, 2000

USAID has supported two US political NGOs for six years in their efforts to strengthen the democratic system in post-communist Russia. Working with their partners across the country, noteworthy progress has been made in bringing the Russian electoral and legislative systems forward toward democratic norms. This report reviews progress to date and looks ahead to the next stage in this vital collaboration between our two nations.

**Purpose:** The principal objectives of this paper are to assess the current political environment and suggest a menu of options for future USAID activities in support of democratic development in Russia. The U.S. Embassy Mission Performance Plan for 2000-2002 states: "The consolidation of democratic institutions and values in Russia over the long term is a vital U.S. national security interest."

**Methodology:** In addressing its task, the assessment team reviewed the USAID-supported activities of the International Republican Institute (IRI) and the National Democratic Institute of Foreign Affairs (NDI) and their activities in these fields: political party building, non-governmental organization (NGO) development, civic coalition and network building, parliamentary training, civic advocacy and the training of trainers.

The assessment team held nearly 100 meetings with individuals who have participated in the work carried out under USAID's agreements with NDI and IRI, as well as with those who have benefited from the program since 1994. Among the people in both countries with whom the team consulted were experts who know well the politics of present-day Russia and the role the two American NGOs have played or might play in the future in the country's process of democratic development. The team also analyzed the documents defining the project's history and parameters.

In addition to its work in Washington and Moscow, the team participated in field interviews in several key and geographically dispersed Russian cities. These included St. Petersburg, Tomsk, Rostov-on-Don, Samara, Ekaterinburg, and Chelyabinsk.

**Political Setting:** The collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991 presented a virtually unprecedented opportunity to American foreign policy: the possibility of helping transform the political and economic foundations of a country that had been the principal adversary of the US for more than 50 years. During the early part of the decade, Russia passed through a period of great uncertainty that included a failed coup by diehard adherents of the former Soviet system and armed confrontation between the executive and legislative branches of the government.

The election of Vladimir Putin in March 2000 marks the start of an uncertain era for the country. Since he became President, Putin has taken and proposed a range of actions aimed at strengthening the position of the central government. In May, he appointed seven governors general who will oversee elected governors and other officials in the country's 89 major political districts. The move to place political appointees over officials elected by the people has provoked alarm among those concerned with the future of democratic governance in Russia.

**Political Parties:** The political party panorama remains unsettled. The Communist Party is, by a small margin, still the largest vote-getter. While becoming more moderate with the passage of time, it is unlikely to be considered democratic for the foreseeable future. The Unity bloc, which formed in support of President Putin, is very strong in the Duma. It is uncertain, however, whether it will make the transition from a traditional Russian "party of power" to a true political party. The SPS coalition and Yabloko define the reformist democratic center and have been the principal beneficiaries of NDI and IRI assistance. However, together they now account for less than 15 percent of the total national vote and find themselves in an identity crisis of sorts. Talk of Yabloko unification with SPS has been increasing with every passing week.

**Civil Society:** Civil society (NGOs) constitutes an important democratic link between the grassroots electorate and the political structure of the country. Russia's NGO sector is very young, but shows signs of having a vital, highly motivated core. However, linkages between NGOs and the political sector are weak, with misunderstanding and distrust characterizing the relationship. NGOs offer significant potential for expanding the growth of democratic practice in Russia.

**USAID Strategy:** The USAID/Moscow strategy seeks to support a democratic transition in Russia that will help create a more open democratic society where informed citizen participation flourishes at the community, regional and national levels. The team has reviewed the USAID strategy statement in the context of the Institutes' several programs. It believes that no modifications in that statement are now required.

USAID has supported the development of the democratic process in Russia since 1994. The goal of NDI and IRI has been to carry out programs to provide training and technical assistance to reform-minded centrist political parties and non-governmental organizations (civil society).

**Recommendations:** The assessment team is convinced that, in the wake of the second presidential election in March and the third parliamentary balloting last December, the altered political landscape in Russia in no way invites or sanctions an end to such US engagement. The Congress's decision to create its own Russian Leadership Program-Open World to share with the Russian political class the realities and achievements of the United States validates this conviction.

Accordingly, the assessment team recommends first and foremost that:

Official US funding for programs aimed at working with the political and NGO communities to strengthen democratic systems and norms in Russia continue for at least the next four years.

While much progress has been made in recent years in areas such as helping to create a nucleus of democratic centrist parties, managing campaigns, conducting elections, and the development of a small but vigorous civil society, the job is still incomplete. The withdrawal of US assistance to the development of a strong and sustainable democratic sector would send an ambiguous signal, one that would be contrary to US interests in having a stable, democratic Russia.

Below is the team's specific menu of recommendations. They appear at fuller length with accompanying rationale statements in Section V of this report.

1. Address the issue of critical mass in making USAID's and the Institutes' future planning.
2. Increase US institutes' concentration in the regions.
3. Broaden party outreach.
4. Encourage elected officials' post-election responsiveness to constituents and to strengthening their legislative skills.
5. Increase legislative accountability.
6. Continue and expand emphasis on programming that targets younger people under the age of 40.
7. Strengthen the relationship between political parties and civil society (NGOs).
8. Emphasize sustainability in all assistance projects with NGOs.
9. Establish a website to disseminate the Institutes' training materials.
10. Enhance the return on the investment being made through the Russian Leadership Program-Open World

## **I. Introduction**

### **A. Objective of the Assessment**

Since the fall of Communism and break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991, a central concern of United States policy in Russia has been the nurturing of a stable, democratic, free market society. The U.S. Embassy Mission Performance Plan for 2000-2002 states: "The consolidation of democratic institutions and values in Russia over the long term is a vital U.S. national security interest, given Russia's size and vast resources, its nuclear arsenal, and its historic legacies. A vibrant democratic Russia will also directly contribute to other U.S. national interests such as economic prosperity, law enforcement, and human rights."

The underlying assumption of this assertion is that a peaceful and prosperous Russia would pose less of a threat in such strategic areas as the control of nuclear weapons and the potential for aggressive actions against other states. Since 1992, the realization of the democracy goal posited in this statement has been a central component of the USAID/Russia program.

The principal aims of this paper are to assess the current political environment and suggest options for future USAID activities in support of democratic development in Russia. In addressing its task, the assessment team has reviewed the USAID-supported activities of the International Republican Institute (IRI) and the National Democratic Institute of Foreign Affairs (NDI) and their activities in the following fields: political party building, non-governmental organization (NGO) development, civic coalition and network building, parliamentary training, civic advocacy and the training of trainers.

### **B. Methodology**

Fieldwork in Russia for the assessment took place between May 21 and June 16, 2000. Prior to travelling from Washington, team members conducted an array of interviews with relevant governmental, institutional and academic individuals knowledgeable about the democratic process in Russia and the related role of the USAID program. For a complete list of persons contacted for this assessment, please see Annex B.

In addition to its work in Moscow, the team did field interviews in several key and geographically dispersed cities. These included St. Petersburg, Tomsk, Rostov-on-Don, Samara, Ekaterinburg, and Chelyabinsk.

The assessment team was comprised of: 1) David Cohen (Team Leader), MSI Senior Associate; former USAID Mission Director in Bolivia, Panama, Haiti and Sri Lanka; 2) McKinney Russell, MSI Senior Associate; former Counselor of USIA Country Public Affairs Officer in the USSR, Germany, Brazil, Spain, and China, and currently Senior Consultant for the International Research and Exchanges Board; and 3) Boris

Makarenko, a highly regarded Russian political consultant specializing in internal politics. Per arrangements by USAID/Moscow, two adjunct members from the participating Institutes aided the team: 1) David Denehy, former Russia Country Director for IRI; and 2) Robert Norris, NDI advisor and political consultant. Translation services for the team were provided by Andrei Dakar and Sergey Voronin.

The team would particularly like to thank the Russia offices of USAID, IRI and NDI for their outstanding logistical and substantive support, which facilitated the completion of this assessment of a complex issue in a very short time.

## **II. Evolution of the Political Process in Russia**

### **A. 1991-99**

The collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991 presented a virtually unprecedented opportunity to American foreign policy: the possibility of helping transform the political and economic foundations of a country that had been the principal adversary of the US for more than 50 years. During the early part of the decade, Russia passed through a period of great uncertainty that included a failed coup by diehard adherents of the former Soviet system and armed confrontation between the executive and legislative branches of the government.

Following these events, an environment of relative stability and forward momentum was established under the leadership of the country's first democratically elected president, Boris Yeltsin. A new constitution was written, and officials were elected in 1993 and subsequent years at the national and local levels.

At the same time, far-reaching steps were taken to reform the remnants of the failed centrally planned economy. Many former state-owned enterprises were privatized with the encouragement and assistance of Western governments, especially the United States, and the international financial institutions.

The expectations of the international community for Russia's future were high. Harmonious economic change and political stability were widely anticipated.

While some economic reforms were successful, many of the steps taken proved to be ill-conceived and incomplete. Perhaps most damaging was the widespread corruption that accompanied the privatization of former state enterprises. Out of this corruption rose a class of privileged individuals who became known as the oligarchs, men whose wealth and the concomitant influence that it brought threatened the very stability of the nation. Their ability to buy policy and favors from the nation's rulers contributed to a major economic collapse in August 1998.

The oligarchs have managed to gain expanding control over the nation's news media, both print and broadcast, although strong elements of independent media outlets survive. Criminality and corruption at many levels have fueled widespread worry about the effectiveness of the rule of law in the country. This has had a chilling effect on the overall environment, the strengthening of democratic processes and the economy, and the attraction of needed foreign investment

On the political scene, for those who believed that holding elections equaled democracy, impressive progress was made in the mid-1990s. Between 1993 and 1999, numerous elections were held, both at the national and local levels. In nearly all instances, voter turnout was large. However, while most of the elections were determined to be free, their fairness was often suspect. The national government, regional governments, and special interest groups interfered in the electoral process and made equal access to media and the voters difficult or impossible.

As time passed, the relationship between President Yeltsin and the Communist Party-dominated State Duma (the Lower House of the Russian parliament <sup>1</sup>) grew more acrimonious. Legislation essential to continuing the economic reform process and strengthening of the political system often became stalled or shunted aside.

In the last months of the Yeltsin Administration, the outlook was hardly promising. Though sharp increases in the price of oil enabled Russia to escape the direst consequences of a threatening economic meltdown, the investment environment was still poor and the banking system unhealthy. After trying and rejecting a series of prime ministers, Boris Yeltsin selected Vladimir Putin in 1999 for the job and as his designated successor. In an abrupt move, Yeltsin then resigned from the Presidency on the last day of the year, leaving Putin as the acting head of state.

From both his positions, Putin used the political means at his disposal to consolidate power rapidly. He greatly increased his personal popularity as the perceived successful leader in putting down the insurgency in Chechnya. These actions combined to place him in a nearly invincible position as the March 26th elections grew near.

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<sup>1</sup> Under the 1993 constitution, Russia has a bicameral legislature. Members of the Duma are elected in proportion to the population of Russia's political/geographic subdivisions. A portion of the Duma representation is reserved for members of political parties that receive no less than 5 percent of the popular vote. The remaining positions are reserved for individuals who may or may not run with a stated party affiliation. The upper house of the Russian congress is known as the Federation Council. Its membership is comprised of state governors and speakers of regional legislative assemblies. Because of the difference in the nature of the two houses, the Duma has traditionally been the focal point for the most vigorous national political debate.

## **B. The Putin Era**

In the brief period leading to the December Duma elections, Vladimir Putin and his political allies engineered the creation of his own political movement called Unity.<sup>2</sup> Unity went on to win the second largest number of seats in the elections and, with Putin's election in March, it has assumed a key supportive role for the president in the State Duma.

Vladimir Putin's background includes extensive service in the KGB and other national security entities. While he has retained a number of Boris Yeltsin's senior officials, many new appointees in the upper levels of his administration come from military or intelligence backgrounds.

Since his election as President, Putin has taken and proposed a range of actions aimed at strengthening the position of the central government. In May, he appointed seven governors general who will oversee elected governors and other officials in the country's 89 major political districts. The move to place political appointees over officials elected by the people has provoked alarm among those concerned with the future of democratic governance in Russia.

Other legislative proposals the President has put forward would eliminate the direct participation of the elected regional governors in the Federation Council, the upper house of the Russian Parliament. Another would set up ways for the judicial removal of miscreant governors and lesser elected officials.

Given the large presence of the Unity bloc in the Duma, it is unclear how far-reaching the new legislation will be when finally, after all the expected amendments, it is passed into law. Many express real concern because they perceive an evolving drive to strengthen the hand of the President at the expense of local authority in Russia's current federal form of government. At the same time, other elements of public opinion welcome this anticipated build-up of central power and hope it portends meaningful action against corruption and a general improvement in the political and economic climate across the land.

## **C. Political Parties**

Since the disintegration of the Communist Party of the USSR, its successor, the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF), has held onto the support of about 25 percent of the electorate. Other parties, after a hiatus of over 70 years and with no continuity from the past, have come and gone as the result of failures, incompetence, shifting coalitions, and personality conflicts. The main incentive to launching new parties has been the proportional representation system that is utilized in the election of

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<sup>2</sup> While Putin is not officially a member of Unity, the bloc is unambiguously identified with him.

half of the State Duma, the lower house of the Russian Parliament, where national party lists and electoral strategies are key determinants of control. On the regional level, however, parties remain generally weak.

Some political observers expect a continuing decline in the role of parties under the presidency of Vladimir Putin. His strategic aim of strengthening the state implies a greater role for the federal bureaucracy, which hardly encourages the political participation of parties in either executive or legislative decision-making. The relative majority of elements in the Duma that support him leaves Putin comfortable leeway to manage his legislative agenda. It will enable him to cobble together majorities on case-by-case basis, either with liberals in passing accommodating economic laws, for instance, or with the leftists on measures that strengthen state power.

The **Communist Party** remains the only political party with its nationwide network of organizations, membership of half a million, and a well-organized system of decision-making. It still manages to attract large numbers of voters – its 24.2 percent in the December State Duma elections was the highest garnered by any party.

The popular perception is that the KPRF is a party of older people who are more active voters. With the passage of time, this constituency will inevitably diminish in number and therefore in political influence. At present, however, the party has the potential of winning a majority in 20 to 30 of the Federation's regions out of a total of 89.

The party is undergoing an uneasy and controversial process of evolution from a totalitarian party-state powerhouse to a parliamentary party that plays by the rules. Communist radicals are gradually losing influence to moderates and reformists. However, the rigidity of their aging electorate is a significant obstacle to any serious internal reform or the building of coalitions with other left-of-center forces.

It appears that Communist Party will preserve its position in the next electoral cycle as the biggest single political force, but that it will not develop any potential for winning national elections or transforming itself into a kind of social democratic party. Even with their currently large vote, the Communists' influence in the Duma is cut sharply by the Unity bloc, which is nearly as large.

The federal executive is striving to turn the **Unity bloc** into a real party. It has strong representation in the national parliament and is trying hard to take advantage of the trend toward centralization. Observers expect that within a year it will develop a national network of representation in regional legislatures. If the President continues to support the building of the party, uses it adroitly as a tool of Moscow influence over regional elites, and manages it as a source of political action to bypass the governors' own parties of power, Unity may develop into a strong bureaucratic machine representing the federal state in regional politics. In doing this, it could become a strong player in national elections.

However, the bureaucratic genesis of Unity, the fact that it was called into being from the top, is a real obstacle to its reaching down to the grassroots level. If the support of the Presidency flags, Unity will quickly degenerate into a symbolic party and become a hostage to local interests, thus reliving the fate of previous versions of the party of power during the Yeltsin years.

A pale version of a would-be party of power is the **Fatherland Party** started in 1999 by several governors of affluent regions and headed by former Prime Minister Primakov. Though it got 13 per cent of the national vote in 1999 parliamentary elections and has a sizable faction in the Duma, Fatherland has lost its *raison d'être* and already displays clear signs of disintegration and paralysis of political will. It is a party on the path to stagnation.

The **two liberal political organizations** (liberal in the generally accepted right-of-center European sense, such as the German FDP), have a real potential for viability in the new landscape. Both have roots going back to 1993. **Yabloko** is the only liberal party that participated actively in all three parliamentary and both presidential elections and has consistently filled the niche of liberal opposition to the regime. However, with only 6 per cent of the popular vote in December 1999, its weak showing in recent elections has brought it to the brink of its demise as a factor in the State Duma.

The other liberal party, the **Union of Right Forces (SPS)**, is an energetic coalition of several liberal parties. The Democratic Choice of Russia, (DVR), once the strongest agglomeration of liberal reformers, managed to put the coalition together in 1999. The SPS scored a modest success in the December 1999 elections with some 8 per cent of the Duma vote, in part because of its support for the policies of then Prime Minister Putin. However, it was disappointed not to have been invited to join his presidential coalition.

For these various reasons, SPS and Yabloko now find themselves in an identity crisis of sorts. Their regional organizations show minimal signs of viability in many regions of the country; but they have very limited prospects in the coming regional elections. The two factions are in *de facto* opposition to the government in the national parliament.

Their sense of crisis has generated a sudden appetite for coalition building in the camps of both parties. SPS and Yabloko coordinate their activities in the Duma very closely, and they present a nearly identical voting record in the Lower House. For the first time in their history, in May 2000, the two parties nominated the same candidate in the gubernatorial elections in St. Petersburg. They have also encouraged their regional organizations to work together in elections. Both parties are seriously weighing the potential goal of a single list of candidates in the next parliamentary elections.

It is widely understood, however, that the process of eventual integration of the two parties faces a number of daunting obstacles. These include personal rivalries, mutual

suspensions, policy differences about the role of government, the unpromising chances of victory for liberal candidates in most elections, and the absence of an agreed-upon political leader in the liberal camp, one who could conceivably be seen as a potential presidential candidate.

At this early stage of the coalition explorations, the parties seem driven by a negative motive, the simple fear of political extinction, rather than by positive programmatic goals. The impetus toward integration in the liberal camp, nonetheless, is stronger than it has ever been in the past decade. The possibility offers a basis for hope that the liberal segment of the Russian political community will be able to cohere for greater strength in the coming political battles.

#### **D. Status of the Democratic Process**

Full-blown democracy has not come to Russia as many hoped it would back in 1991. With the wisdom of hindsight, it is obvious that that expectation was highly unrealistic. Unlike many other countries in the former Soviet bloc, Russia had no democratic history or traditions to draw on. Prior to the totalitarian Communists, the Romanov czars, who were not noted for their participatory style, had ruled Russia for over 300 years.

Given this background, Russia has made extraordinary progress in the past decade. It has elected two presidents and has held numerous elections for legislators at the national and local levels. By most standards, elections have been competently run and judged to be generally free by teams of international observers. The evidence is very persuasive that a large proportion of Russians now recognizes elections as the only way to legitimize power. Polls show that close to 75 percent of the populace is resolutely opposed to any postponements of elections.

While the institutions of government still suffer from major shortcomings, they have enough credibility to attract the energies and commitment of people, many of them quite young, who believe that improvements are indeed attainable. In speaking with politicians and NGO officials at the local level, the team met a number of extraordinary people who truly believe that being involved in local governance and community organizations will enable them to change their lives and those of their constituents or members. For example, a female member of the Samara town council who is also a pediatrician said with great emotion that she believed her presence on that body was holding back the tide of corruption and incompetence in that region.

A representative of a legal rights NGO told the team of his many frustrations. When asked whether the situation left him pessimistic, he said it did not and that he was an optimist because he was convinced that the country could never return to what it was 15 years ago. Others made similar observations with timeframes going back as little as five years.

The announcement by President Putin of a range of initiatives to rein in the independence of political structures in the regions (see the preceding section) has raised danger signals for many. Even more troubling have been the government's recent moves against independent media that are seen as politically motivated. These proposals provoke many people to voice openly their worries about the viability of the country's democracy. Many others, including people who owe nothing to the present government, take a careful wait and see attitude, hopeful that firm leadership will eliminate the corruption and disarray that marked the final Yeltsin years.

### **III. Assistance Programs for Democratic Development**

#### **A. USAID Strategy**

The USAID/Moscow strategy seeks to support a democratic transition in Russia that will help create a more open democratic society in which informed citizen participation flourishes at the community, regional and national levels. This strategy is specifically articulated in the Mission's Strategic Objective 2.1 (as contained in the "USAID/Russia Country Strategy 1999-2000" of April 5, 1999): "Increased, better-informed citizens' participation in political and economic decision making."

USAID has supported the development of the democratic process since 1994. It has pursued the project objective through Cooperative Agreements with the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) and the International Republican Institute (IRI).

In accordance with its scope of work, the assessment team has reviewed the USAID strategy statement in the context of the Institutes' programs and finds it to be sound and reasonable. The team suggests no modification.

The team has prepared a menu of options (Section V) that offers a number of recommendations which, if taken, would result in changes in USAID's program-specific strategy. Included among those are options proposing a greater focus of assistance priority on Russia's regions, outreach to a broader array of political parties, and stronger attention to improving the interface between civil society and the political system.

## **B. Program Assumptions**

Any assistance program operates on the basis of assumptions. There is always a risk that what is assumed will not work as planned or proves over time to be faulty. Russian political and economic development is highly volatile and unpredictable and assumptions may quickly prove invalid.

Based on its observations and discussions, the assessment team identified apparent assumptions. Those listed below apply variously to USAID, IRI and NDI. Brief parenthetical comments follow each.

1. Following the fall of the Soviet Union, a transition to a fully functional Western-style liberal democracy and a free market economy could be anticipated in a relatively short period, once Russians were given the essential skills. (This overly optimistic assumption was reflected in US Government policy to Russia in the first half of the 1990s. It created unrealistic expectations across the board, but particularly with regard to the democratic process activities undertaken by USAID, IRI and NDI. To some degree, the program is still being judged by some for not having provided the expected quick fix.)
2. Democracy can best be pursued in transitional societies such as Russia by concentrating efforts on centrist, reform-oriented parties. (A majority of the people that met with the team now believes that broadened contact with other parties and democratically inclined individuals may be equally productive.)
3. Given the country's enormous dimensions, it is best to concentrate program resources in a limited number of key locations. (While this continues to be the prevalent view, many feel that a greater focus on the regions is critical to project success. It will be essential to find means of creating multipliers, such as coalitions and networking, that can help disseminate democratic practices beyond the specific locales of project implementation).
4. Aiding NGOs, that is, organizations that work in civil society, is an effective means to promote grassroots citizen participation and identify citizens' needs. (This assumption is still key to the project. However, some NGOs are reluctant to take on an advocacy role as an intermediary between the people they represent and the various levels of local and national governance.)
5. Russian parties are not likely to lose face or respect from voters if they accept assistance from the United States or other foreign donors. (This assumption seems to be valid. However, in the heat of campaigns, assisted parties have been accused of having compromised their integrity because of their relationships with foreign entities such as the Institutes. This has not, however, been a significant factor in the parties' lack of electoral success.)

6. Seminars and workshops constitute the best mode of providing assistance to counterpart parties and NGOs. (While there is no real debate that this method has served the project purpose well, spreading democratic practices to reach a critical mass of people across the country will require more innovative use of the Internet and other interactive program tools.)

### **C. The IRI and NDI Programs**

USAID has supported the development of the democratic process in Russia since 1994. The essential goal of the Institutes has been to carry out programs to provide training and technical assistance to political parties and non-governmental organizations.<sup>3</sup>

Newly elected Rostov city Duma member Gennadiy Stupikov, an experienced politician barely 30, has recently affiliated with Unity. His earlier productive experience with Institute programs while heading NDR's youth section in the southern oblast, as well as the uninterrupted contact IRI has maintained with him, ensure that he remains an active, responsive contact for the Institute.

During the early stages of the two Institutes' involvement with the political transition in Russia, their American field representatives nourished hopes that Western-style parties would quickly take shape and flourish. There was concentration on the transmission of democratic value systems and on insights into the workings of established political systems in the US and Western Europe. It soon became evident, however, that, in the wake of 70 years under the Marxist-Leninist system, the Institutes and their Russian partners first had to tackle political training in the tough fundamentals of democratic politics before they could expect sustainable results.

The period roughly from 1995 to the latter part of 1999 saw an intensive level of effort by the Institutes to train selected partners in those fundamentals. Their focus was on subjects such as membership and volunteer recruitment, requirements of leadership and preparing for it, the crafting of platforms, fundraising, and internal management.

A beneficiary of Institute training while an undergraduate political activist at Tomsk State University, Aleksey Oblasov, 24, recently founded the League of Young Politicians, a campaign consultant group active throughout central Siberia. He and six colleagues created the first interactive link with voters for a successful Duma candidate from Kemerovo during her campaign and have run more than 20 campaigns.

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<sup>3</sup> See Appendix A for a summary of the activities and methodologies and budget for the IRI and NDI Cooperative Agreements, as prepared by the respective Institutes.

**Geographic focus** outside the two major cities was readily negotiated between the two Institutes to ensure better coverage of the sprawling Russian landmass and to avoid duplication. Each decided on concentration within some six cities, though the lines drawn did not exclude the informal addition of other sites. Both were active in Moscow and St. Petersburg; but informal occasional contacts between the two organizations appear to have enabled them to avoid getting in each other's way.

Sergey Kolesnik is a Yabloko campaign manager in Chelyabinsk. He lamented that most party resources remained in Moscow, making it difficult to succeed in the regions. He felt the regions also were disadvantaged because they received little coverage in the national news media, thus impeding their political development.

Both Institutes, given their own political heritage in the US, were naturally drawn to collaboration with reform-minded centrist parties. There was a shakeout of party strengths and weaknesses in the elections of 1993 and 1995. One party, called Yabloko after the initials of its three founders – the word itself means apple in Russian – stood out as the most promising potential engine for reform.

Other groupings, notably Russia's Democratic Choice (DVR) and Our Home is Russia (NDR), were at various times closely identified with the Kremlin leadership. Cooperative efforts with the latter two, particularly on IRI's part with NDR, marked this period as well. NDI estimates that it has devoted some 70 percent of its party-building efforts to work with Yabloko. NDI actively encouraged the forging of the new coalition called the Union of Right Forces (SPS) in 1998 and 1999. In each case, the reasons the Institutes chose this or that party as partners related to their commitment to democratic values and their potential to improve the political standing by benefiting from the expertise which the US institutions were able to offer.

Based on discussions with representatives of the various parties in the seven cities visited, it appears that relationships with the Institutes have been cordial and mutually satisfactory throughout. Both organizations have been good listeners to their Russian partners' expressed interests and requirements. When several local government entities outside Moscow, for example, expressed a need for training in the financial nitty-gritty of municipal administration, one of the Institutes was quick to respond with targeted training.

When lawyer Lyubov Babich ran for the State Duma in 1995, she was the only woman in a field of 18 in her Siberian constituency. Drawing on specialized campaign training received from IRI, she set a high standard for innovation and activism and made an excellent showing. Her successful and self-sustaining political research and consultancy company, Persona Grata, offers high-quality campaign analysis and training in public relations to clients in many cities.

There was rather intense focus on national party development during the early part of the second phase of the project from 1995 to 1999. It was broadened in 1997 to include a greater thrust into the country's regions. The Institutes rightly perceived the importance of strengthening democratic institutions at the local level and that new cadres were emerging in these locales who would gain significant know-how from the training they could offer. Further, a greater decentralization of power followed the introduction in mid-decade of the direct election of governors in the country's 89 political regions.

The volatility of the political landscape in Russia has been a constant source of difficulty and frustration for the two Institutes. Parties form, dissolve, transmogrify, realign, and die. Both Institutes have shown skill at identifying political comers and sustaining their links with them through many such transmutations.

Vladimir Ryzhkov, 34, has been a member of the State Duma since 1993, first in the RDC faction and later as first deputy speaker under the NDR banner. He worked closely on many projects with the Institutes in his role as director of training for NDR. He remains a frequent informed contact for the Institutes and is a much respected member of the new Unity bloc.

Likewise in the 1995-99 period, both Institutes reached out in differing ways to spot and support a range of NGOs. Their cooperative agreements with USAID called for such diversification. As the total number of such NGOs in the country is now variously estimated as high as 65,000, the assistance choices had to be carefully made.

NDI and IRI set up slightly differing systems of grants for the NGO partners. The former worked to develop a coalition of six NGOs, called VOICE, whose focus is mainly in the area of civil rights. The six IRI NGO grantees are more politically focused in nature, and have not been nurtured as a coalition. From the team's conversations with a number of these organizations in various cities there has emerged a strong sense that the recipients have been well chosen and that the relationships are, predictably, highly valued by the NGOs.

Leonid Grishin, Director of the Ekaterinburg office of the Forum of Migrants, learned from NDI how to build a coalition of NGOs. He contacted other NGOs in the region he had heard were also trying to help migrants. Together they formed the Urals NGO Coalition on Migrants, which has brought its participants an enhanced ability to coordinate settlement and employment issues, and a more effective collective voice in working with the Federal Migrant Service.

The sustainability of the assisted NGOs after Institute financial support is completed remains a large open question. Few of them are diversified enough in their financial

support base to feel secure about future survival. This is an issue addressed in the recommendations of this report. (See Recommendation H)

The methodologies for working with parties and with NGOs that were adopted by the two Institutes do not differ from each other in essential ways. The seminar/workshop with extensive instruction, much discussion, give-and-take, and role-playing is the preferred mode. Increasingly, Russian trainers who have learned their trade with one of the two organizations are featured. IRI developed a dynamic Russian trainer during its work with NDR whose charismatic style, and IRI-sponsored textbook on politics in Russia have frequently served as central elements in other training sessions. NDI materials were also cited as a major plus of their teaching method. One NDI-trained NGO said that sometimes his organization received training materials that seemed irrelevant to their needs, only to discover six months later that the materials were key to helping them resolve some previously unencountered issue.

Lilia Belenko, an MD specializing in pulmonary disorders, is running for the city Duma in Ekaterinburg under the Yabloko banner. A two-time participant in the Moscow School of Political Studies, she is seeking office because of her dissatisfaction with the current Duma's lack of responsiveness to the people's needs. Dr. Belenko credits NDI workshops with providing invaluable assistance in helping her to structure her campaign.

Joint programs by the two Institutes are not frequent. One recently held following the December 1999 Duma elections has received high marks from participants. Working with the leadership of the Yabloko party, NDI and IRI organized a post mortem analysis of the party's disappointing results in the Duma elections.

The team believes that there are other opportunities for the two organizations to cooperate for the overall attainment of their own and USAID's goals. These are reflected in several of the recommendations with which this report concludes.

The Institutes hit an unexpected block in the middle of 1999. In the lead-up to the State Duma elections of December, the results of which are described in Section III above, all foreign political entities were enjoined from active work with political parties after the date of the promulgation of forthcoming new legislative elections. There ensued a period of rushed and somewhat uneven program activity by both Institutes to complete as much pre-election training as they could before the ban's onset. The remainder of the year, with its political assistance freeze and concentration on NGO activity, provoked some careful rethinking of longer term goals and priorities.

In their plans for the present year, prepared before the election of President Putin in late March, the two Institutes set out several main goals for the final year of their respective CAs.

NDI plans to concentrate its political party programming in a few selected regions: St. Petersburg, Astrakhan, Chelyabinsk, Ekaterinburg, and Moscow. The Institute had strongly advocated the establishment of a democratic coalition along the lines of the SPS to avoid the continual splitting of the reform vote. Buoyed by the party's success in the December 1999 voting, the Institute plans to work actively for its strengthening and further growth. Dialogue with Yabloko on its new challenges has begun. Future party-building programs will concentrate on local and regional chapters. The VOICE coalition of NGOs also will continue to get major attention.

As for IRI, it intends to maintain its program outreach to a larger number of cities in northern Russia, the Moscow area, the southwest, and Siberia. The Institute expects to continue to work with pro-reform parties, but is going through a process of assessment to figure out how best to help them become strong and sustainable and, importantly, to build bases of support in the regions. With a number of their former political contacts now in the Unity and Fatherland parties, IRI is also looking into ways that those new agglomerations might be assisted.

#### **D. Outcomes and Implications**

The essential purpose of this assessment, as noted elsewhere, has been to offer USAID an informed menu of options for the continuation of its assistance to advance the democratic process in Russia. It was not to undertake an evaluation of the past assistance provided by IRI and NDI.

However, to inform its thinking about the future, the assessment team had an obvious need to understand what has already taken place. The earlier part of this section provided a description of the assistance programs carried out by the two Institutes. This section will consider briefly what that assistance has accomplished and relate the impact to date with the team's recommendations in Section V.

The 1997 Cooperative Agreements (CA) signed between USAID and the Institutes direct that they "will work with 'pro-reform' parties to strengthen their long-term organizational capacities during and between election periods," (NDI CA) and produce a "strong, sustainable political party system" (IRI CA).

**Political party building** was the first key challenge for the Institutes. After starting from virtual scratch, Russia now has a recognizable democratic, centrist political party infrastructure (see Section III C). The most democratic parties, as they have undergone some morphing during the last eight or nine years, are now Yabloko and SPS. Both offer their members an identifiable political point of view, open participation, accountability and transparency.

That these parties possess these attributes is a reflection of many things, above all that their leaders have firmly embraced democratic values. It is also because they have

taken good advantage of the many seminars, workshops, and other encounters that the Institutes have run. Both Institutes have developed a strong and well-appreciated customer orientation to working with their party counterparts. They have consistently demonstrated both the will to respond to defined assistance needs and the ability to deliver a quality training product. The team has seen the results of these efforts as professional political entities, capable of doing what is required to succeed, namely, to select candidates, run well conceived and structured campaigns, and often to develop credible political messages.

The Cooperative Agreements also foresaw the importance of sustainability in these political institutions. If one were to judge the soundness of parties solely by their success on Election Day, then the state of Yabloko and SPS, with some 14 percent of the December 1999 Duma vote between them, would warrant concern. In addition, although both parties have nationwide representation, they are quite weak in the provinces, where local politicians' parties of power seem to prevail. If stable democracy begins at the grassroots and is a bottom-up process, then Yabloko and SPS, as well as the Institutes, must give substantially more attention to working effectively in Russia's regions.

Many people interviewed by the assessment team felt that the CA mandate to focus work on pro-reform parties was too limiting and that the Institutes' should broaden the number and nature of the parties and politicians with which they work. For the country to be defined by truly democratic processes, democratic behavior and ways of thinking need to be spread (See Recommendations C - Broaden Party Outreach and A - Critical Mass).

A recurrent concern voiced by many of the team's interlocutors was that parties and elected officials pay relatively too little attention to their constituents once elections are over (See Recommendation D - Constituent Orientation).

**Parliamentary training**, defined as heightening representatives' responsiveness to constituents and their ability to act as effective legislators, has been a program objective since about 1997. While both Institutes have provided assistance in this area, the benefits were not yet apparent to the team, either at the national or local level (See Recommendation G - NGO/Party Interface).

Both Institutes have made a good initial effort in strengthening NGOs' role in civil society. Beginning almost from zero, Russia now has a growing and increasingly dynamic NGO sector. Across the board, the team was impressed at the prominence assigned to the role of civil society by broad segments of the Russian political system.

The two Institutes' resources have allowed them to work with a limited number of NGOs. Each now concentrates on just six institutions. They are well chosen, and the team's conversations with a number of them offered insights into the institutions'

capacities and problems. The early results of local level NGO coalition building efforts by NDI were quite positive, although the attempt to create a link between the NGOs and the parties through the VOICE coalition produced a certain degree of discomfort among NGOs who said that they did not want to be perceived as politically partisan. IRI's approach focuses on moving its group of political service NGOs from program grant support to being suppliers of strategic resources such as training and research for both private and public sectors.

In wider perspective and based on discussions with political observers and party officials, it was clear that the NGO sector still remains quite small and fragile and seems not to have made major progress in carving out its potential political role in Russia. The sustainability of many individual NGOs is quite precarious. In addition, many NGOs do not fully accept their roles as promoters of change through an advocacy role with parties and elected officials in the political sector (See Recommendations H – NGO Sustainability and G - NGO/Party Interface).

For understandable reasons, many NGOs are concerned that working too closely with the parties risks giving them a politically partisan image that could be detrimental to the work they do. Both NGOs and the parties, perhaps facilitated by external assistance, need to make greater efforts to establish a higher level of confidence and trust so that their common objective, that of more responsively serving citizens' needs, can better be met. (See Recommendation G - NGO/Party Interface).

Finally, there is the issue of critical mass. Russia is a vast country. USAID program resources are relatively small. The problems of instituting democratic governance after more than 80 years of Communist rule and culture remain daunting. It is imperative that USAID and the Institutes plan carefully and take concerted actions to ensure the broadest possible multiplication and leveraging of the benefits accruing from this assistance effort (See Recommendation A – Critical Mass).

There are various means available to fortify the critical mass of USAID's democracy programs. These include concepts such as Russification (the use of Russian trainers and specialists), drawing on NGO for training support, the use of the Internet both as an essential information resource and as a virtual community for addressing issues and problems (See Recommendation E – Increase Legislative Accountability), and intensive networking and the forging of coalitions of organizations and individuals.

## **E. Best Practices**

Some of the best practices that the team observed were, in no particular order, as follow:

1. Both Institutes came at their tasks with the conviction that it was better to be reactive than proactive, i. e., that responding to felt needs on the Russian side should come before making program proposals of their own.
2. The training of Russians as trainers and their repeated use proved both less costly and more effective in contributing to the transfer of know-how and the enhancement of long-term sustainability.
3. The assignment of Institute representatives who have extensive European political experience (such as the two present directors of the offices in Moscow) adds depth to the program and is a policy that pays off.
4. The use of print materials that reflect the best of Western experience presented in Russian and within a Russian context has resulted in the wide availability of a number of excellent training aids of easily accessed and lasting reference value.
5. The use of funds from other sources, notably the National Endowment for Democracy, to complement those provided by USAID helps augment program effectiveness.
6. Patient work to encourage coalition building and coordination between reform-minded parties can pay off substantially.
7. IRI's small grant program to provincial NGOs brought useful training and political research experience to their partners. In several promising instances, these skills are being nurtured and expanded to bring the NGOs to a solidly sustainable status.

## **F. Other Donor Assistance**

Other donors in the specific field where the Institutes are active include principally the Western European political foundations. Most active by far are the five German foundations affiliated with that country's main parties, the SPD, CDU, CSU, FDP, and the Greens. The liberal FDP's Naumann Stiftung is especially close to and supportive of Yabloko and has worked actively to help it enter the Liberal International. The SPD's Ebert Stiftung has interests that are quite broad. The long-time head of its Moscow office has an extensive agenda, including publication of academic analyses of the country's political development. He also organizes yearly encounters at Schlangenbad near Frankfurt for Duma and Bundestag representatives to get to know each other and exchange views. The British and Canadian Embassies also extend small grant support.

The National Endowment for Democracy (NED) has been for many years a funder of the Institutes' work worldwide. Allocations for projects in Russia and other parts of the world are determined by the two organizations' home offices and may vary considerably from year to year. For special projects outside the purview of, but highly

complementary to, the USAID Cooperative Agreements, NED funding is especially valuable to NDI (which uses it for travel grants) and IRI (which uses it for additional NGO assistance) in Russia.

Other donor entities such as the Soros-funded Open Society Institute and the Eurasia Foundation, eschew direct involvement with political organizations. Some of the NGOs can count on modest support from such foundations and others. Two of them expressed to the team their intention of seeking additional funding support from the Mott Foundation. Of special note are the 33 public access Internet sites that the OSI has funded and installed at 33 major universities across the country. These are a major contribution to Russia's connectivity with the rest of the world and they should, in many cases, ease the communication challenges which the Institutes and their counterpart parties and NGOs confront.

#### **IV. Recommendations**

The assessment team recommends first and foremost that official US funding for programs aimed at working to strengthen democratic systems and norms in Russia continue for at least the next four years. This period was chosen because it would permit the conclusion of President Putin's current term in office and see the country through one more presidential and two Duma elections.

While much progress has been made since the program began in 1993 in areas such as building a nucleus of democratic centrist parties, managing campaigns, conducting elections, and the development of a small but vibrant civil society, the job is still incomplete. Were assistance to the development of a strong and sustainable democratic sector to be withdrawn at this time, it would send an ambiguous signal, one that would be contrary to US interests in having a stable, democratic Russia.

While the team would enthusiastically endorse increased funding for this program, the reality is that, if anything, program resources are likely to decline in the future. Thus, the recommendations made below do not assume increased budgets for the Institutes. Most of the recommendations involve trade-offs, such as broadening the participation base of those invited to roundtables and workshops (instead of focusing on individual parties) and reducing the number of events held in Moscow in order to place greater emphasis in the regions. In each of the recommendations, cost implications are discussed briefly. These discussions are intended as illustrative examples to assist the program planning dialogue between USAID and the Institutes.

This section contains ten recommendations, based on the information gathered and evaluated from nearly 100 meetings held by the assessment team. The scope of work for this assessment requested a "menu." Accordingly, the recommendations below have not been prioritized. The choice provided in the menu implies that any given recommendation could be selected without regard to the others. While the presented

options can be considered individually, together they are intended to offer a coherent and synergistic whole.

Three basic themes guide the menu below.

- The issue of critical mass requires thoughtful and constant attention. USAID democracy resources are limited and have been declining in real value due to taxes, inflation, and budgetary constraints. Nurturing the democratic sector in this enormous nation presents numerous highly complex problems. If this program is to be successful in attaining the overall USAID strategic objective, implementation must focus more on how to spread the benefits of its results more broadly around the country.
- There must be much greater attention given to the currently poor linkage between people at the grassroots and the existing political structures, parties as well as legislatures. The political entities of governance must be more accountable for their performance to the electorate.
- Limiting assistance to political parties in the democratic center which do not now win 15 percent of the national vote is counterproductively restrictive. Without abandoning these parties, the program and the Institutes should reach further out to other groups and politicians to help them understand the functioning of democracy and give them relevant skills to function more effectively.

**A. Recommendation – In completing future planning, USAID and the Institutes should specifically address the issue of critical mass:**

The achievement of critical mass is too important to leave to assumption or chance. Success will require close attention to program synergies and multipliers. Critical mass should be addressed with regard to each program element. Existing models for achieving this objective should be identified and expanded. Continuing the collaborative working relationships with other donors, such as the two Institutes' use of NED resources in Russia, can also bring about important leverage and synergies.

**Rationale:** Even if it is assumed that the real value of USAID democracy program resources remains constant, critical mass, the level of effort necessary to produce a credible result, will continue to be an important issue to consider. Russia is a large country with a widely dispersed and diverse population. A transformation of the behavior and lives of the people of this country is an imposing challenge.

The concern is that, even with the most wisely conceived and implemented effort, the USAID program to enhance democratic process in Russia may be too small to achieve more than isolated pockets of program impact. If the desired outcome of the assistance is for Russia to become a truly functional democracy, the work of the

democratic forces, such as political parties and civil society, will have to be sufficiently encompassing to define the democratic process for the nation as a whole.

Several very useful, low or no cost models for achieving critical mass already exist under the program. One approach is the “Russification” of the types of assistance provided by the Institutes. Viable models for this can be found in activities to train trainers and enable political service delivery NGOs (e.g., the Regional Center for Political Technologies in Perm). In both examples, qualified, experienced (and lower cost) Russians from the Institutes and partner NGOs are able to deploy over a greater area to carry out program objectives. An additional example noted by the assessment team was the successful work that has been done in creating NGO coalitions, in which elements of the civil society have learned and shared experiences. Another valid approach is the networking of previous program participants from around the country (e.g. The Moscow School for Political Studies). Such networking, including greater use of the Internet, enables, encourages and facilitates democracy-minded individuals and institutions to work with one another over the greater distances of the Russian landmass.

**B. Recommendation – Increase concentration in the regions: Future assistance should be oriented toward concentrating more on working in the regions:** While this would occur at the expense of central level assistance, the choice would be justifiable. The weaknesses at the regional level pose a tangible threat to the successful achievement of the project goal of putting in place a sustainable democratic process. Therefore, an enhanced regional focus merits a higher priority for scarce budget and staff resources.

**Rationale:** Political parties in Russia unquestionably have played a greater role at the national level than in the regions. The primary reason for this is the proportional representation system by which half the members of the State Duma are elected. This mechanism, in part, reserves a proportional amount of the seats in this house to parties that succeed in gaining more than five percent of the national vote and then proportionately, according to the percentage of the vote won. Though some of the parties have run candidates for the presidency, neither Yeltsin nor Putin formally associated themselves with any of the established parties during their successful campaigns.

With few exceptions, proportional representation is not utilized in the selection of the regional and local representative councils. Moreover, the regional governors usually have not been affiliated with national parties and often have resorted to establishing their own regional political groupings in a style that is analogous to the national “party of power” concept.

Experts state that no stable functional democracy can exist without a base of two or more viable political parties. There is virtual unanimity that the successful

institutionalization of the democratic process in Russia will require a broad base of popular participation through actively engaged political parties at the regional level. That this is not taking place is a matter of concern with significant longer-term implications.

Although both NDI and IRI have had programs in the regions for over five years, such assistance has usually run a poor second to the attention given at the Moscow party headquarters level. A credible argument can be made that the basic building blocks<sup>4</sup> of national party development are now in place, although the job is arguably incomplete.<sup>5</sup> While the number of regions that can be targeted for assistance will be relatively small, the establishment of replicable models and networking should help to create a critical mass. Shifting the focus of training and assistance from Moscow to the regions should have little or no impact on budget.

Finally, there are now many other opportunities for fledgling politicians to get training in Moscow. This represents an asset that will make it less problematic for the Institutes to focus on the regions.

**C. Recommendation – Broaden Party Outreach:** There is a widely perceived need for the Institutes' programs to reach out beyond those few parties they believe to be "truly" democratic. While USAID-supported assistance has helped strengthen the structure of the democratic core, this group now represents less than 15 percent of the voters nationwide and much less in the regional governments. To achieve the project goal of a stable democratic Russia, democratic political values and practices must be spread throughout the body politic. An expanded outreach should be made to a broader spectrum of parties, especially Unity, and perhaps even reform-minded members of the Communist Party (KPRF) and non-party affiliated politicians. This expansion could be achieved, with minimal program budget implications, through a more inclusive approach to training, workshops and seminars. An interesting model for this approach is the broad inclusiveness of the seminars run by the Moscow School of Political Studies.

**Rationale:** Consonant with their Cooperative Agreements, both Institutes have placed priority emphasis on supporting the structural growth and success at the polls of

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<sup>4</sup> An illustrative list of such building blocks would include: the ability to identify and run candidates, the establishment of a relatively coherent core ideology, possession of the tools necessary to run an effective modern political campaign, and the existence of a representative party structure in at least half of the regions of the country.

<sup>5</sup> This statement is particularly true with regard to Yabloko. For the most part, it also pertains to SPS. As a newly formed coalition, SPS has had little direct assistance from either of the Institutes. However, the most significant parties at the core of SPS received a great deal of help in the past from both IRI and NDI, and already have skills that will be easily applicable in the new environment. Should the Institutes follow another of the assessment team's recommendations – to expand the group of parties on which they focus – headquarters assistance for any of the new entries could certainly be considered.

reform-minded centrist parties. Emphases have shifted with their changing leadership, but the thrust has been generally constant.

Both Institutes have paid particular attention to the centrist Yabloko party. In earlier periods, the Kremlin-backed party known as Our Home is Russia (NDR) benefited from substantial Institute help as well. While representatives of the Communist Party occasionally have taken part in larger scale programs involving a number of parties on issues like election monitoring, little other contact with it or the eccentric Liberal Democratic Party has been made. Two Communist Party officials in the provinces, both of the moderate and reformist stripe, expressed to the team interest in taking part in training programs the Institutes might undertake in future.

Times are changing – indeed, they have changed. With the sharp drop in the number of parties in contention, the forging of a rather successful coalition called the Union of Right Forces (SPS) last fall and the emergence of the Unity bloc, the new putative “party of power,” the constellation looks very different that it did less than a year ago. As this report is being written, the likelihood is rising daily that Yabloko, which has had quite discouraging setbacks in recent national elections, may soon cooperate more closely or even coalesce with the SPS.

The Institutes naturally have followed these and related events very closely and discussed them often with their centrist party counterparts. They have seen many of the latter shift into new formations under new banners. The IRI and NDI partners and independent political observers with whom the team met were eager to discuss the implications for the two Institutes of the evolving landscape. Nearly without exception, these interlocutors spoke out in favor of a wider field of action for the Institutes and less identification with individual parties.

**D. Recommendation – Greater priority must be given post-election responsiveness to constituents and strengthening officials’ legislative skills:**

USAID is encouraged to give a high priority in their programs to building an ethic of post-election responsibility and responsiveness to the interests and needs of their constituents, as well as to strengthening the legislative abilities of elected officials. In Russia’s hurried transition, the tenet of representative democracy – that elected officials are chosen, among other reasons, to serve their constituents – has not received the attention it merits from the country’s political class. Both in legislative and administrative competency and in essential responsiveness to voters’ needs, there is substantial room for growth and improvement. Among other things, the parties and their candidates must improve their skills and sensitivities to their constituents’ interests that both democracy and re-election require.

**Rationale:** Since their earliest engagement in Russia in the early 1990s, the Institutes have carried out intensive and, overall, very effective work in raising the political professionalism of the reformist parties’ election-related capabilities. One academic

commentator wrote recently that the Institutes had done a good job of designing and building with the parties, but had had minimal effect on how they function.

While the assessment team's observations did not bear out so sweeping an assertion, it was clear that the parties must do a better job with and for their constituents in the periods between elections. Observers and NGO constituents alike expressed resentment that the parties – and unaffiliated politicians as well – only appeared when they wanted votes in upcoming elections.

Most agree that there has been a sufficient number of elections to allow the Russian political class to gain considerable skill in managing the business of running for office. An oblast (regional) second secretary in the Communist Party boasted that his was the only political entity that listened to people's gripes about official inattention or indifference. Conversations with party officials of NDR and Yabloko about reception centers where citizens' grievances are addressed indicated that there was at least some attention being paid to this problem beside that given by the Communists.

Also of great importance for democratic development was the issue of legislative and parliamentary competence among elected officials at all levels. Recently begun training for newly elected parliamentarians is a step in the right direction. Institute programming in local administration, another relatively new initiative, also has been popular. There is clearly room for expanding this type of training and for work in assisting elected legislators to carry out their duties in a responsive way. In budget terms, any additional training in this area could be compensated by a reduction in training in areas already better developed, such as campaigning methodology.

**E. Recommendation: Increase legislative accountability:** Create a mechanism to track and publicize the performance and records of legislatures and their individual members, thus increasing transparency and accountability.

**Rationale:** To raise the level of accountability of elected officials there is a need for their performance and voting records to be followed closely and duly publicized to the electorate. The work of Common Cause in the US may be the nearest analogue to such a monitoring and reporting role.

As noted in the previous recommendation, there is currently only limited contact between elected officials and constituent citizens once elections are over. As the system now functions, legislators in the State Duma who come to office as the result of being on a successful party list have little incentive to be responsive to the people they represent. As a consequence, many feel that their success and chances for re-election do not greatly depend on their being perceived as incumbents who truly serve the public interest.

Increasing the transparency of legislative activity, both at the national and local levels may be an effective means to improve the accountability of elected officials. Increased transparency should also have the effect of heightening citizen interest and hence the electorate's participation in the democratic process, a key factor in encouraging responsive governance.

The assessment team was told of existing NGO and university-based efforts to gather and make available Duma voting records. These activities should be assessed to ascertain the capacity for giving greater public exposure through low-cost Internet and other media channels.

**F. Recommendation - Continue and expand emphasis on programming that targets younger people (under the age of 40):** Programs with youth movements, whether or not they have a defined political coloration, should continue and, if anything, have an even higher future priority for the Institutes. It is very clear that, for a truly democratic process to become the way of life in Russia, a large-scale change in political culture must take place. The team has been impressed by the political drive and achievements of many of the younger beneficiaries of NDI and IRI training, especially in the provinces. It is evident that the nation's hopes for a democratic future lie substantially with them. Existing programs by the Institutes have begun to target younger people. The effect is noteworthy: the emergence of an enthusiastic, energetic group of politicians that "get it" about democratic governance.

**Rationale:** Both Institutes have wisely sought to connect and engage with younger political activists. IRI's specially funded two-year program for activities with youth and women and NDI's emphasis on younger audiences have paid off well. The largely non-political Council of Youth Organizations in Rostov-on-Don and the more activist in the League of Young Politicians in Tomsk are examples.

The generation born since 1965 is relatively less encumbered by Soviet era mindsets. This was particularly evident at the weeklong seminar of the Moscow School for Political Studies in May. In a freewheeling debate about the country's next four years under President Putin, two-thirds of the 70-odd under-35 politicians and journalists taking part identified themselves as "optimists." Their stated positions were filled with an exhilarating sense that they could indeed make things change and improve. (It is noteworthy that 13 new members elected to the State Duma in December 1999 were recent graduates of the MSPS.)

There is a substantial mobility among younger activists. They take what they have learned at Institute seminars with them to new political homes. Many thousands have affiliated with the new Unity bloc of the President. Those who keep their affiliations, like younger Yabloko officials the team met in St. Petersburg, project political savvy that well exceeds their calendar years.

As the Institutes contemplate outreach into new regions of political salience, the existence of dynamic youth organizations with which they would collaborate should be a factor influencing their choices. Further, the younger participants in US-sponsored exchange programs, when they are identified and integrated into a coherent follow-up program, may be useful guides to appropriate cohorts.

**G. Recommendation - Strengthen the relationship between political parties and civil society (NGOs):** NGOs are important in the democratic process because they provide a key linkage to facilitate the participation of citizens at the grassroots. In this regard, it is vital that political parties, both before and especially after elections, work more closely with NGOs, while being sensitive to these organizations' needs to remain largely non-partisan. USAID-supported assistance can play a key role in helping to bring the two sides together by creating comfortable and budgetarily neutral opportunities, such as workshops and roundtables, for NGOs and parties to get to understand one another better. Through such mechanisms, they can begin to build greater mutual respect and cooperation. NGOs also should be encouraged and assisted to work more closely with elected officials in an effort to alleviate the legal, administrative and policy-related causes of the problems faced by their beneficiaries.

**Rationale:** Based on the opinions of the broad cross-section of people and institutions interviewed by the assessment team, Russians throughout the democratic sector have accepted the importance to the democratic process of having in place a large vibrant civil society, a term which was generally understood to refer to non-governmental organizations – NGOs. More often than not, however, this is where the consensus ended.

Members of political parties interviewed, most of whom represented either Yabloko or one of the components of the newly formed SPS coalition, often said that relationships with NGOs were only helpful when the latter could steer large numbers of votes to the parties' candidates. Most party interlocutors did not seem to be very concerned with the NGOs as advocates for the needs of their constituents. In return, believing that the parties were not interested in what they or their clients cared about, the NGOs were unenthusiastic about pursuing relationships with the parties or their elected officials.

In addition, the NGOs were fearful that close association with particular parties might stain them with a partisan identity that could bring harm to their long-term objectives. Given the inwardly focused party mindset of the NGOs mentioned above, one may conclude that the NGOs' concerns had some justification.

When asked about their general interface with elected officials at both the national and local levels, a majority of the NGOs apparently avoided such contact. To paraphrase a typical response, they stated that their responsibility was to treat the symptoms of the issues important to them (e.g. human rights abuses, homeless refugees, difficult

business conditions, poor delivery of social services), but not the causes. Reasons for this response varied from “we just don’t do that sort of thing,” or “we don’t have time for that,” to cynical views that such an effort would only be a fruitless waste of time and effort.

**H. Recommendation – In all assistance to NGOs, emphasize sustainability:**

NGOs that are all or largely dependent on the funding of a single benefactor face a highly vulnerable future. It is imperative that, from the very outset of assistance, the Institutes work with their counterpart NGOs in developing sustainability skills and appropriate strategies. Their ability to survive beyond the period of the Institutes’ largess needs urgent attention. Training in fund-raising, income generation, public relations, and interaction with government and private sector entities are subjects that are also addressed by other USG activities in Russia. Cooperation with those efforts and active participation as trainers by specialists recruited by NDI and IRI are two modalities for enhancing NGOs’ prospects for survival.

**Rationale:** In recent years, both Institutes have given increasing attention to enhancing the size and substance of the instruments of civil society, largely non-governmental organizations. Through separate mechanisms, USAID has provided additional support to strengthening and empowering such entities (e.g. the Povolzhie NGO in Samara).

While there are numerous NGO success stories, there are also concerns that must be addressed. As noted above, one of the greatest of these is sustainability, i.e. the ability of an organization to survive and continue to achieve its objectives beyond the period of assistance. Some of the NGOs visited by the assessment team voiced serious concerns regarding their sustainability because of their dependency on external support.

To illustrate, one very able and politically savvy social service NGO in St. Petersburg had just moved to much smaller quarters and was in a state of serious retrenchment due to financial constraints. Another vulnerable entity does outstanding work supporting the role of women in Russia’s political life, including the production of an excellent monthly newspaper. However, the NGO is wholly dependent on Institute funding from NED to continue publishing and was not taking advantage of opportunities to generate income through advertising.

The NGOs aided by the Institutes’ experience problems similar to those of many other kinds of Russian organizations also dependent on foreign support. Among other concerns, they are frustrated by the limitations and disincentives, such as tax issues and registration difficulties, faced by Russian institutions, such as private businesses, that might be able to assist them. A range of programs to confront these and related problems, including a new USAID project in support of NGOs, should be considered for enhanced linkage to the NGOs working with the US Institutes.

Diversification of funding sources to eliminate sole reliance on one of the Institutes is an obvious way of ensuring continuation beyond the period of their funding support. The Moscow School of Political Studies is a striking instance of success at this. Virtually all of its funding comes from other foreign entities, mainly European. In addition to a small IRI grant, it also receives a separate institution building grant from USAID/Moscow.

**I. Recommendation - Establish a website to include the Institutes' training materials:** Given the lasting value of many of the training aids created by the Institutes for their programs, they are encouraged to undertake the placement of the most broadly useful of them on their existing websites (or perhaps a combined website) for downloading by interested institutions and individuals. Hyperlinks between the two Institutes could make training aids and other publications available to an even wider number of potential users. A possible further benefit from the use of such materials might be as a way of introducing the Institutes' democracy-enhancing materials in part of the country otherwise outside their purview.

**Rationale:** The high level of appropriateness and sophistication of the seminar materials prepared by the Institutes for their programs impressed the assessment team. In recent years the production of Russian-language training aids has greatly expanded and ranges from subjects as diverse as effective management of finances for local administrations (IRI) to a detailed poll watcher's guide to spotting irregularities in balloting (NDI). The output aims at being truly relevant to Russians in Russia and, based upon a limited spot check, it seemed to attain that goal. Both of the Institutes' Moscow offices maintain detailed and orderly records of all their publications along with extra copies of each. Between them, they have published scores of training aid documents.

The lasting value of the materials was cited repeatedly during the team's field encounters with participants in the Institutes' programs. One of them questioned the policy at a particular recent Institute seminar of restricting distribution only to participants, holding that broader access would only support the purposes of the training.

Wider distribution of hard copies, given printing costs and postal uncertainties, does not seem practical. Placing the principal past and future training documents on accessible electronic sites, however, may hold much promise. It also can permit access for the Institutes to big areas of the country that stringent financial limitations now place off limits for them.

**J. Recommendation - Enhance the return on the large investment being made through the Russian Leadership-Open World (RLP) program:** The USAID democratic process and Russian Leadership-Open World programs should be more closely coordinated. Both programs share a similar objective: the establishment of a

stable, free market-oriented democratic Russia. There is substantial additional benefit to be realized from the large investment being made in this exchange program. A coordination mechanism for both planning and follow-up should be put in place as soon as possible.

**Rationale:** Pursuant to specific congressional legislation, an exchange program funded at \$10 million for FY 1999 was initiated. The Russian Leadership Program-Open World was conceived and launched by Dr. James Billington, the Librarian of Congress. The project was renewed and funded once again at the same level in FY 2000.

The project's goal is to provide a large number of Russians involved in the political process the opportunity to visit and better understand the United States. It is anticipated that some 2000 visitors will again travel to the U.S. this year. After the visit, the hope is that participants will return home with a better appreciation for the true meaning of participatory democracy, the benefits of an open free market economy, and a higher level of motivation to implement such systems in Russia.

Because they share similar goals, NDI, IRI and a number of their political party and civil society counterparts have felt that the RLP could provide an important synergistic boost to their activities. Participating organizations in the USAID democracy program already have been a rich source of nominated candidates for program.

A source of frustration has been the inability to follow up once the program's participants have returned to Russia. The assessment team has been informed that, up until now, it has not yet been possible for the USAID grantees to receive lists of those who have been selected for these trips to the US. This has impeded possible post-trip activities that could build on the travel experience or help establish a network that could spread and sustain the benefit of the travel. The assessment team understands that progress is being made to ameliorate this situation in the near future.

## **ANNEX A**

### **SUMMARY OF COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT ACTIVITIES, METHODOLOGIES, AND BUDGET**

## IRI Activities and Methodologies

### IRI response

<b>Assistance Component</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Approach Used</b>	<b>Results/Outcomes</b>
Political Party Building	<p>Program focuses on institutional development of political parties, particularly the development of regional organizations, developing and strengthening of internal structures for the training of activists and coordination between national regional and local party organizations.</p> <p>Developed campaign and communications skills within regional and local political parties.</p>	<p>Within national political structures worked to develop training and regional organization departments.</p> <p>Strengthened parties institutionally by working on charter, registration and memberships recruitment activities.</p> <p>Provided training to local and national activists in survey research, message development and communication, and membership recruitment activities.</p>	<p>Yabloko, RDC, and OHR created training divisions and regional offices. Became capable of developing agendas and training plans, identifying trainers and writing training manuals.</p> <p>Yabloko, RDC and OHR improved coordination of activities between their national and regional organizations. The youth auxiliaries of Yabloko and OHR developed websites to enhance communication among their branches and recruit new members.</p> <p>Hundreds of IRI trainees held key positions in regional and national campaign headquarters. Yabloko"s campaign philosophy for this election season was to use only its members rather than hired consultants. In the regions where IRI works, Yabloko, SPS and OHR ran campaigns that were more successful than nationwide. Yabloko received 5.93 percent nationwide but received 7.9 percent in those cities where IRI conducted training. SPS received 8.5 percent nationwide but received 9.6 percent in cities where IRI conducted training. Out of the 10 single-mandate seats won by OHR, two were in regions in which IRI works.</p>
NGO Development	Developed and institutionally strengthened counterpart political training NGOs in target regions.	Using short-term, bridge type financing institutionally strengthen partner organizations; in particular having them focus on future	A number of IRI-funded NGOs branched out and established regional organizations. Some began receiving alternative sources of funding; the United Democratic Center received a National Endowment for

<b>Assistance Component</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Approach Used</b>	<b>Results/Outcomes</b>
		funding source development, strategic planning and building constituencies.	Democracy grant and the Nevsky Research Center received funding from the Open Society Institute. Began to develop long term strategic plans. Financial procedures are more stringent and professional. All use computers and are working toward establishing web pages and networking through the Internet.
Civic Coalition & Network Building			
Parliamentary Training	Increase effectiveness and transparency of local, regional and national legislative bodies.	Develop interactive relationship between constituent and legislator through constituent service, increased transparency and responsiveness in the legislative process.	Single-issue roundtable discussions led by Duma deputies brought attention to issues and involvement of community. Staff training for more than 160 State Duma deputies" assistants raised level of understanding of how to best represent a district and provide constituent services. Deputies are planning to establish reception offices in their districts.
Training of Trainers	Trained party activists and staff to sustain training programs within structure of political parties.	Working within party structures institutionalize training centers and methodologies.  Utilize previous program participants in training programs reinforcing training.	Created a cadre of Russian trainers capable of conducting seminars on a variety of subjects. Each party has its own trainers to conduct political education programs. IRI almost exclusively uses Russian trainers from this pool of experts. Continued training is resulting in the trainer pool growing and current trainers becoming more skilled.
Civic Advocacy			

**Cooperative Agreement No.: 118-A-00-97-00158-00**

**April 1997 - October 2000**

<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>Total Expenses as of 5/31/00</b>	<b>5362 Party Building Expenses</b>	<b>5363 Parliamentary Expenses</b>	<b>5364 NGO Development Expenses</b>
3,800,000.00	2,483,888.56	1,831,277.97	111,128.21	541,482.38
	100.00%	73.73%	4.47%	21.80%

## NDI Activities and Methodologies

NDI Activities	Description	Approach Used	Results/Outcomes
Political Party Development	<p>Programs address strengthening regional structures, improving intra-party communications, recruitment and organization of activists, building coalitions with other parties and civic groups, outreach to citizens, campaign planning, message development, door-to-door voter contact, literature preparation, media relations, and candidate training.</p>	<p>Maintain offices in Moscow and Samara staffed by international experts on party development and Russian politics.</p> <p>Invite short-term practitioners from the U.S., Canada, Western and Eastern Europe to share experiences and respond to specific requests.</p> <p>Conduct multi-party and single-party training seminars and workshops, roundtable discussions, one-on-one consultations. Training sessions include interactive exercises, discussions and presentations.</p> <p>Invite Russian activists to U.S., Germany, Poland and other countries to learn about party roles in more established democracies.</p> <p>Encourage parties to develop their own trainers and training capacities.</p>	<p>Thousands of reform-oriented individuals have developed political leadership skills that have been put to use in building political parties.</p> <p>Parties such as SPS and Yabloko have produced their own party trainers and conducted their own training programs.</p> <p>The SPS coalition formed to unite DCR and numerous smaller democratic parties. SPS and Yabloko have now agreed to coordinate their efforts.</p> <p>Party leaders and activists better understand the political process and have employed NDI practices to participate more effectively in elections.</p> <p>NDI's party partners cooperate closely with NGOs in some regions.</p> <p>Yabloko has improved its internal and external communications systems.</p> <p>Yabloko has established regional party chapters throughout most of Russia.</p> <p>SPS conducted effective voter contact and pollwatching programs before the 199 elections.</p>

<b>NDI Activities</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Approach Used</b>	<b>Results/Outcomes</b>
Civic Advocacy	<p>Programs focus on strategic planning, advocacy campaign organizing, increasing civic participation in elections, building coalitions with parties, and voter education.</p> <p>NDI provides assistance to various civic groups in forming a national coalition, called VOICE, that is dedicated to promoting democracy and democratic elections.</p>	<p>Maintain offices in Moscow and Samara staffed by international experts on civic organizing and advocacy.</p> <p>Invite short-term practitioners from the U.S., Canada, Western and Eastern Europe to share experiences and respond to specific requests.</p> <p>Conduct training seminars and workshops, roundtable discussions, one-on-one consultations. Training sessions include interactive exercises, discussions and presentations.</p> <p>Provide day-to-day assistance and guidance in long-term planning to VOICE leaders and regional activists.</p> <p>Invite Russian activists to U.S. to learn about civic organizing and advocacy in an established democracy.</p> <p>Encourage civic groups to develop their own trainers and training capacities.</p>	<p>Thousands of reform-oriented individuals have developed advocacy, organizing and leadership skills that have been put to use in building civic groups.</p> <p>A coalition of civic organizations in defense of voters' rights, VOICE, has formed.</p> <p>VOICE conducted a conference on elections for 140 civic activists from 39 regions; developed and released statements on the state of democracy in Russia prior to the presidential elections; conducted four regional election monitoring training sessions and a study of pre-election media coverage in seven regions.</p> <p>VOICE activists in Ekaterinburg effectively monitored oblast elections in June 2000.</p> <p>A State Duma hearing was organized to discuss issues essential for NGOs.</p> <p>Civic partners have organized and conducted issue advocacy campaigns.</p> <p>NDI's civic partners have improved their governing structures and made their operations more effective.</p> <p>Civic partners have increased their numbers of volunteers and activists.</p>

**Cooperative Agreement No.: 118-00-97-00187-00**

**July 1, 1997 - December 21, 2000**

<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>Total Expenses as of 5/31/00</b>	<b>Political Party Development @ 75%</b>	<b>Civic Advocacy @ 25%</b>
\$3,800,000.00	\$3,298,272.43	\$2,473,704.32	\$824,568.11

**Geographical breakdown of programming**

Moscow	45%
St. Petersburg	10%
Cheliabinsk	15%
Ekaterinburg	15%
Astrakhan	15%

Please note that NDI's accounting system does not track expenditures according to functional categories, so these breakdowns are estimates.

## **ANNEX B**

### **COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT ASSESSMENT**

The assessment team completed its draft of this report on June 16<sup>th</sup> and presented it on that date to the USAID Mission to the Russian Federation, the two Institutes' representatives in Moscow, and interested members of the US Embassy staff. It made a similar presentation in Washington on June 22<sup>nd</sup> to USAID headquarters officers, the leadership of the IRI and NDI, and interested State Department officials. Participants at both sessions were invited to share with the team their reactions and questions about the paper.

The team is grateful to those who attended one or the other of these meetings and offered their comments and useful correctives. The present final draft reflects those helpful submissions.

Detailed responses reached the team from the three offices most directly involved in the efforts that were object of the assessment team's inquiries, that is, the USAID Mission in Moscow and the two Institutes. As required by the Scope of Work, these responses are presented in full below.

Inasmuch as no concrete questions were raised in the Institutes' letters, no point-by-point reply is presented – rather, their general comments have been taken into account in the final editorial work on the report. However, since 16 specific questions were raised in the Mission letter, they are answered in the fourth section of this annex immediately after the text of the Mission's letter.

#### **1. IRI**

June 26, 2000

Mr. David Cohen, Mr. McKinney Russell, Mr. Boris Makarenko  
Management Systems International, Inc.  
600 Water St., SW  
Washington, DC 20024

Dear Assessment Team:

I am writing in response to the recently completed draft Assessment of U.S. AID Political Party Building and Related Activities in Russia. First, I would like to express how pleased we are by the incisiveness, thoroughness and fairness of your report. Somehow you managed in a very short time to acquire a real sense of the issues Russia faces with regard to political party building and the problems that need to be addressed.

We are in full agreement with most of the recommendations you made in your report, and in many cases we are either already implementing the recommendations -- we have already put some of our Russian-language training materials on our website, for example -- or we are in the planning stages of implementing them -- such as a young professionals program we are developing. However, we would like to make a couple of points:

1. We agree with your recommendation that work should concentrate in the regions rather than in Moscow, and have been focusing our work in the regions for some time. While we usually coordinate party training with the national headquarters, nearly all of our programming -- both party-related and not -- takes place in the regions. In the past two years alone, IRI has conducted a total of 48 U.S. AID-funded programs in the regions, at which over 60 oblasts were represented. Another 12 programs were conducted in Moscow, but regional representatives attended all of these seminars. We are not clear how we could possibly concentrate more heavily in the regions, unless you mean that we should expand the number of regions in which we work. This leads me to our second point.

2. As discussed in our recent meeting, the report should recognize the need for additional funding for these programs. While in some cases resources can be redirected, most of your recommendations would require additional resources. As you know, funding for party building programs has been steadily decreasing over the years, making our ability to reach more people on a broader basis more difficult.

Per your request, enclosed is the chart of IRI Activities and Methodologies and a breakdown of our expenditures throughout the period of the current grant.

Once again, I would like to thank you for your candid and thoughtful report. We certainly will take your recommendations into consideration in our planning.

Sincerely,  
Lorne W. Craner  
President

encl: IRI/NDI Activities and Methodologies  
Funding chart

## **2. NDI**

Subject: NDI Comments

June 26, 2000

Mr. David Cohen  
Mr. McKinney Russell  
Management Systems International, Inc.  
200 Water Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20024

Dear David and McKinney:

The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) wishes to thank you for conducting a thorough and thoughtful assessment of USAID-sponsored political party building and related activities in Russia. NDI welcomes any effort to improve the effectiveness of its programs and thereby strengthen the democratization process in the countries where it works.

We have read the draft report on the assessment and concur with its recommendations, virtually all of which affirm our current programming aims and practices. We welcome the report's main conclusion that the "programs aimed at working with the political and NGO strata to strengthen democratic systems and norms in Russia continue."

In the months and years ahead, NDI looks forward to building upon its partnerships with Russia's political parties to assist their development as popularly based organizations capable of aggregating the interests of Russian citizens, participating effectively in elections, and engaging in public policy debates in legislatures. New initiatives in the State Duma will aim to strengthen deputies' links to citizens, parties and NGOs, thereby promoting greater openness, responsiveness and accountability in the legislative process. NDI's program in Samara seeks to encourage these same relationships and outcomes at the oblast level. Finally, NDI will help strengthen the democratic process at the local level by helping the VOICE coalition establish itself as an effective mechanism and model for nonpartisan, community-based citizen participation.

In many instances the report recognizes the ways in which its recommendations are already reflected in NDI programs. Where we believe some clarification or amplification is warranted, we have provided brief comments below.

1. Increase concentration in the regions (p. 27). For many years, NDI programming has emphasized the importance of promoting citizen participation in the political process at the local and regional level. Our current program strategy dedicates the vast majority of staff time and program resources to party-building activities in

St.Petersburg, Chelyabinsk, Astrakhan, Nizhni Novgorod, Ekaterinburg, Kaliningrad, Krasnodar, Samara, Saratov and Vladimir. Activities are aimed at helping parties interact with citizens, promote reform agendas and pursue leadership positions at the local level. Indeed, many programs that are physically conducted in Moscow are actually dedicated to assisting national party headquarters in finding ways to support their regional chapters. Our civic program centers on supporting the development of the VOICE coalition in Ekaterinburg, Chelyabinsk, Yaroslavl and St. Petersburg. Finally, NDI's full-time, USAID-funded program to promote participatory local government in Samara clearly demonstrates a commitment to provide Russians outside of Moscow with experiences in and models of democratic governance.

2. Broaden party outreach (p. 28). Because NDI supports the development of a democratic political process in Russia and not any one political ideology, outreach to a broad spectrum of political party partners is a programming imperative. Accordingly, NDI has reached out to form partnerships with Our Home Is Russia (NDR), Democratic Choice of Russia (DCR), each of the parties that now make up the Coalition of Right Forces (SPS) and others, in addition to Yabloko. Indeed, by offering direct advice, facilitating inter-party discussions, and arranging meetings with representatives of Eastern European party alliances, NDI encouraged DCR's own outreach efforts, which resulted in the successful formation of the SPS coalition.

NDI's first priority has been and will remain identifying parties that are clearly committed to democratic reforms and civil liberties and helping to solidify and expand their bases of support. This principle has consistently informed the Institute's strategy in Russia. NDI would argue that the 15 percent of the Russian electorate represented by parties such as Yabloko and SPS, while less than a majority, is still significant. Because they are genuinely democratic in their outlook and organization, these groups have an impact beyond their numbers. The experience of numerous Western democracies, such as Germany, demonstrates the influence small minority parties can have.

The Institute is currently exploring relations with the Fatherland and Unity parties, and hopes to develop mutually rewarding ties. However, these parties, much like Our Home Is Russia, are not yet organized along traditional party lines. Their democratic credentials and interest in Western assistance also remain uncertain. The Institute thus sees little choice but to proceed slowly in offering to cooperate with these groups.

Although NDI views the dissemination of democratic values as a welcome consequence of its programs, its real aim is to strengthen democratic institutions. As such, NDI has devoted fewer resources to cultivating relationships with reform-minded individuals, or reformist factions of parties with ambiguous democratic credentials. These activities could be expanded with additional funding, but the Institute would continue to prioritize work with distinctly democratic organizations.

3. Encourage elected officials' post-election responsiveness to constituents and to strengthening their legislative skills (p. 29). NDI has begun to work in the new Duma to assist deputies in fulfilling their obligations as elected representatives. Consultations aim to strengthen their legislative skills and support their efforts to pass laws and implement procedures, such as committee hearings, that provide for greater accountability in and citizen access to the legislative process. These programs supplement party-building programs by addressing the roles that political parties perform inside the Duma through their party factions. In addition to their party functions, deputies are also assisted in fulfilling their obligations to voters, for example by providing information and services to constituents. NDI's program in Samara seeks to institutionalize more responsive and participatory government at the local and oblast level.

A few additional points related to the background section are worth noting. Although they are not directly connected to the report's recommendations, these matters have bearing on the context from which the conclusions are drawn.

First, NDI would argue that the Communist Party is not the only "real" political party in Russia, as suggested on page 8. Yabloko and SPS, for example, have competed in national elections and have parliamentary factions, traits that qualify them as genuine parties by most standards. That they are small and underdeveloped compared to an organization that enjoyed the privileges of state-sanctioned monopoly for seventy years should not disqualify them, or other serious political groups, from the category of political parties.

NDI would further note that the term "centrist" used in reference to Russia's democratically-oriented groups may be confusing to some readers. Within Russia, the term has generally been used to characterize establishment parties with ill-defined ideologies, such as Our Home Is Russia, Fatherland and Unity, and not groups like SPS, DCR or Yabloko.

Third, the report remarks that political observers expect a continuing decline in the role of parties in Russia. NDI does not see this decline as a foregone conclusion. Instead, it is possible that developments under the Putin presidency will serve as catalysts for party growth and coalition building, as indicated by the recent agreement to merge SPS and Yabloko. Certainly, the need for strong parties that can balance presidential prerogatives has only increased, and NDI would hope that U.S. assistance would seize this moment to help parties assume prominent roles in building a democratic society.

To conclude, while NDI finds merit in all of the report's recommendations, it cannot be stated too emphatically that our ability to implement them would require increased funding. Let us provide some examples. Each institute currently employs one full-time political party trainer. To expand regional outreach significantly and meaningfully beyond existing levels, additional staffing and infrastructure are necessary. If outreach

to "a broader spectrum of parties" is to be undertaken, the institutes must have assurances that they have the time and money to invest in cultivating members of organizations that may have more questionable democratic credentials and sustainability. In sum, expanding or developing any new programs would require increased training resources and administrative support and, accordingly, additional funds.

As you prepare your final report, we hope that you would recognize that implementation of your recommendations is based on an assumption of additional resources being made available for this purpose.

Once again, we thank you for your efforts.

Sincerely,  
Laura Jewett,  
Deputy Regional Director

### **3. USAID/Moscow**

Dear McKinney and David,

USAID would like to thank the MSI assessment team for its draft report on USAID political party building and related activities in support of an open, democratic society and political process in Russia. However, USAID needs more detail on which specific programs have functioned best in order to effectively plan for the future, given the reality that budgets will continue to shrink and obstacles to democratization may increase. USAID/Russia is committed to continuing programs in these critical areas, but, given limited resources, which programs and methodologies have been most effective and should be replicated? We also seek your suggestions for innovative program models or approaches that can increase impact at lower funding levels. Beyond this, we have the following specific comments and questions.

1. Throughout the assessment you refer to the Russian Leadership Program which is now called the Russian Leadership Program-Open World.

2. On page 3, it is recommended that, "Official US funding for programs aimed at working with the political and NGO strata to strengthen democratic systems and norms and Russia continue for at least the next four years." What is the reasoning behind the four-year time frame?

3. On page four of the assessment you quote from a draft of the US Embassy Mission Performance Plan (MPP). The final version of the MPP quote is as follows:

"The consolidation of democratic institutions and values in Russia over the long term is a vital U.S. national security interest, given Russia's size and vast resources, its nuclear arsenal, and its historic legacies. A vibrant democratic Russia will also directly contribute to other U.S. national interests such as economic prosperity, law enforcement, and human rights." (p.21)

The only difference between the final version of the MPP and the passage quoted in the assessment team evaluation is that "soviet historical legacies" now reads "historical legacies." Please make this change.

4. Recommendation A on page 22 urges that USAID should increase its concentration in the regions. Do you propose that USAID should expand to more regions, or focus our activities better in a few key regions?

5. How could USAID specifically work to support the Yabloko/SPS union?

6. On page 23, Recommendation B suggests that the Institutes should broaden party outreach. What types of activities should USAID programs conduct with all political

parties? For example, should USAID invite all of the parties together for specific legislative issues (labor reform) or general seminars (i.e., how to run a town meeting)? What approaches would be best to ensure participation by all parties?

7. On page 27, you recommended that, "... political parties, both before and especially after elections, work more closely with NGOs, while being sensitive to these organizations' need to remain largely non-partisan." How specifically can USAID facilitate closer links between political parties and NGOs? How can USAID ensure that NGOs remain non-partisan in their relations with parties?

8. On page 18, it is stated that, "Parliamentary training, defined as heightening representatives' responsiveness to constituents and their ability to act as affective legislators, has been a program objective since about 1997. While both Institutes have provided assistance in this area, the benefits were not yet apparent to the team, either at the national or local level." Why does the team feel that the legislative program has not showed results at the national or local level? What suggestions does the team have for future parliamentary training?

9. On page 24, you recommended that, "... greater priority must be given post-election responsiveness to constituents and strengthening officials' legislative skills." What sort of activities could increase legislators' accountability to constituents and post-election responsiveness? Is the team suggesting a Samara model activity or an entirely separate legislative strengthening program?

10. Is the NDI/Samara civic participation project a model that should be expanded to other regions? Why or why not?

11. In Recommendation E, you emphasize the necessity of continuing youth programs. Specifically, on page 26 you state that, "Both institutes have wisely sought to connect and engage with younger political activists. IRI's two-year program with special funding for programs with youth and women and NDI's emphasis on younger audience have paid off well." Which IRI/NDI activities have most successfully increased the participation of youth and women in the political process?

12. On page 25, you recommend, "...create a mechanism to track and publicize the performance and records of legislatures and their individual members, thus creating transparency and accountability." Are Duma votes public knowledge? For example, is voting always open and transparent? Are Duma votes recorded and made public?

13. Does the Assessment team believe more resources are required to implement the recommendations presented in the assessment? Given declining resources, USAID would appreciate the Assessment team's analysis of which programs and recommendations are the highest priority.

14. We agree with the team's recommendation to better address the issue of critical mass. Can the team be more specific about what steps USAID should take to multiply the impact of its program?

15. Some analysts assert that Russian parties utilize a top-down structural and decision-making approach. How should USAID focus more on the regions given the central structure of parties?

16. On page 23, Recommendation A, the report states, " Although both NDI and IRI have had programs in the regions for over five years, such assistance has usually run a poor second to the attention given at the Moscow party headquarters level. A credible argument can be made that the basic building blocks of any national party development are now in place, although the job is arguably incomplete." Footnote 6 states, "These building blocks are described illustratively as the ability to identify and run candidates, the establishment of a relatively coherent core ideology, possession of the tools necessary to run an effective, modern political campaign, and the existence of a representative party structure in at least half of the regions of the country." Given that building blocs are now in place, how should USAID now work with and assist political parties?

Sincerely,

Susan Reichle, Director, Office of  
Democratic Initiatives and Human Resources

#### 4. **Assessment Team Response to the USAID/Moscow Letter**

The numbered responses below follow the numbering in the USAID letter.

1. Edit (completed).
2. **Continuation of the program for at least four years:** The assessment report suggests that program funding "continue for at least the next four years." This period was chosen because it would permit the conclusion of President Putin's current term in office and see the country through one more presidential and two Duma elections. At the conclusion of this period, it would be useful to carry out an update to the democratic process assessment. At that time, progress could also be gauged with regard to the observations and suggestions of the current assessment (e.g. the strength of the democratic process at the regional and local levels, the responsiveness of parties and elected officials after elections, the relationship between political parties and NGOs). In accordance with the new assessment, decisions regarding the need for, and nature of, future assistance beyond the four-year period could be made.
3. Edit (completed)
4. **Increased concentration on regions:** To avoid confusion, it should be pointed out that the assessment's use of the word "regions" does not coincide with USAID's application of the term in the context of its Regional Initiatives program. As stated in the paper, if political parties define a well-functioning democracy, then democracy is not doing well in Russia's regions – a situation that must be addressed on a priority basis.

The team's recommendation is that the IRI and NDI emphasize assistance to help parties function more successfully outside of Moscow. The Institutes' programs in the regions should be more coherent and strategic, building on past assistance and planning for the future so that benefits can build on one another. Illustratively, each Institute could select a model region for special focus. The purpose would be to demonstrate how parties could function successfully closer to the people. Contact between party structures across regions should be encouraged. Such networking could maximize the impact of limited assistance resources, addressing the critical mass issue raised elsewhere in the assessment.

In light of the financial limits USAID faces, the suggestion to concentrate more on the regions is not meant to imply that the Institutes must expand the number of regions in which they work. Even without expansion into more regions, the Institutes may feel they would need more money to do the above. However, because additional funding is unlikely, the regional emphasis must be achieved

with revised strategic planning and at the cost of activities that might otherwise have taken place in Moscow or other line items of the project.

5. **How to support Yabloko/SPS union?** Existing models of Yabloko/SPS collaboration and cooperation in St. Petersburg and elsewhere should be studied for use as models for nationwide replication. NDI and IRI are already engaged in informal discussions with their party counterparts in Moscow; but their real contribution can be made outside the capital. The organization of joint training opportunities, for example, could provide a useful role for the Institutes since it would bring together representatives of the two elements on neutral ground.

Quick cross-reporting by the Institutes regarding the kinds of programs and approaches that have worked in various locales would permit the sharing of lessons learned in this challenging effort. The possibilities for the two US Institutes to work together should be explored. Such collegiality might serve as something of a constructive example for the two parties.

The accommodation of the personal ambitions of the five co-leaders of SPS and the one of Yabloko will constitute a principal challenge the success of any new grouping. This problem is one that the six and their respective followers will have to face and resolve for themselves. In that process, there is no evident role for the Institutes to play in what will surely be an intricate negotiation.

6. **Means to broaden party outreach:** Per Recommendation V, C, the team suggested that the “expansion could be achieved through a more inclusive approach to training, workshops and seminars.” Regarding the suggestion in the USAID/Moscow letter, the team believes that encouraging the Institutes to address specific issues under legislative consideration could smack of inappropriate interference. Alternatively, programs to help elected officials carry out their duties, whether in legislative or executive positions, would be more politically neutral and, therefore, more feasible. There already have been several well-received programs addressing areas such as administration and financial management. The inclusion of a range of party representatives is a matter to be addressed on a case-by-case basis – no blanket prescriptions seem appropriate to us. However, including representatives of parties from adjacent regions in training programs is liable to bring extra benefits.
7. **How to improve the NGO/party interface:** Both Institutes should plan seminars and workshops that include representatives from NGOs and parties. The interface between these groups is very significant since it is reflective of an important component of the relationship between parties and constituents.

These occasions should allow for the exploration of areas of mutual interest, while also offering the chance to understand the reasons for concern about each other.

Such opportunities should encourage the NGOs and parties to find discrete areas for confidence-building collaboration that would be less sensitive than those apparently experienced under for VOICE. The NGOs should be encouraged to articulate their needs and goals clearly and to share them with party representatives. In training programs for NGOs, the Institutes should pay attention to the need for instruction in political activism and consider particular training programs that emphasize this aspect of their activities.

8. **Parliamentary training:** While both Institutes' plans and briefings highlighted training for parliamentarians, the team saw little evidence that much of this had actually taken place to date. Aside from the fact that a functioning, representative parliament/congress is a key element of true democracy, in the context of this program there is an additional reason to focus on the need to provide strengthening assistance.

USAID and the Institutes will have their own specific ideas about how to proceed. The team has the following observations: The functioning of the US Congress, especially the key role played by staffers, is a subject that could profitably be addressed by the Institutes, drawing on their own extensive links on the Hill. The role of lobbyists is another theme that could merit attention. Taking advantage of the presence in Russia of Congressional delegations may be one way of bringing qualified US speakers to Russia. The public diplomacy AMPART program may be another.

9. **Work with constituents:** Specific training approaches must be developed to enable Russian legislators and their staffs to carry on a responsive dialogue with their constituents. If one does not already exist, a video could be produced that would illustrate how constituent support functions in the US. Ways should be explored of encouraging elected officials to set up reception points, so-called "priyomnyye," in their home areas, places where citizens could come to get legal and social advice and to register their suggestions and complaints. Finally, American activists across the political spectrum could offer rich insights into ways constituents make their views heard.
10. **Should the NDI/Samara project be replicated in other regions?** While the assessment team did visit Samara and spoke extensively with the NDI personnel responsible for the pilot program, the focus was more on the functioning of the political system in that region of the country. Though the pilot program has been underway for less than a year, it appeared to be off to a good start with many activities in place and operating. However, it was a bit puzzling that NDI should be carrying out this endeavor in a locale separate from its other party/civil society building efforts elsewhere in the country. The two programs would appear to have a great deal of inherent complementarity and synergy. The team encourages NDI to reconsider shifting one of its regional party programs to the Samara region.

11. **Youth programs:** The assessment does not specifically recommend work with youth, per se. It does strongly endorse efforts to work with younger politicians, those between the ages of 20-40. These are the people who are less encumbered with the "cultural overhang" of the Soviet era and can comprehend different ways of doing things. The most outstanding program of this type visited by the assessment team was the Moscow School of Political Studies. The MSPS brings together people under the age of 35 of disparate political backgrounds for week-long seminars featuring world renowned speakers. The seminars provide them with a highly fertile intellectual environment in which to think and exchange ideas on relevant topics. In addition, the experience, aided by effective follow up, provides an important opportunity to create networks of key, motivated individuals contributing to the element of the programs' critical mass. The Russian Leadership Forum-Open World could provide a similar opportunity if its newly inaugurated follow up program is continued and successful.
12. **Mechanisms to Publicize Duma Voting Records:** It is the assessment team's understanding that Duma votes are not publicly recorded and not made available in any routine manner. The team was informed that a political action group at Moscow State University has recently begun developing a ready source for such information, but that it had not yet gained a desired level of outreach and dissemination. The person principally behind this initiative was a faculty member at MSU named Tatiana Udovina. Through this group or others about which we have not heard, there may be opportunities for USAID to be of assistance through the Institutes in the packaging and dissemination of this essential information.
13. **Are more resources necessary to carry out recommendations? Can the recommendations be prioritized?** Questions concerning budget implications and the prioritization of recommendations are addressed in an expanded introduction to Section V, Recommendations.
14. **Critical Mass:** The assessment team believes that the narrative for the Recommendation in Section V, A, contains relevant illustrations of how to respond to concerns regarding critical mass. On the bottom line of any critical mass strategy for a country as large as Russia must be the creation of networks and coalitions to spread not only the benefits of formal training and experience, but to share new ways of thinking about how problems can be solved through democratic mechanisms. The team suggests that USAID and Institutes directly address this critical topic and develop a specific critical mass strategy for each segment of the project.
15. **Working in a Top-Down Environment:** The team does not believe it is likely that the parties' Moscow headquarters would resist efforts to strengthen their regional outposts. It is anticipated that one important result of such assistance

would be an overall improvement in national election results of the assisted parties

Despite the parties' tendency to maintain top-down control from Moscow, the assessment team found in conversations with provincial party leaders a good measure of autonomous thinking and eagerness to build party strength on the basis of their perceived local needs. Attitudes in St. Petersburg in particular, where both Institutes have been quite active, seemed notably marked by the readiness to think independently. The Institutes, in choosing the necessarily few regions in which to concentrate their efforts, given the limitations imposed by funding ceilings, can be expected to focus on areas where local leadership is strong and conditions hold promise of development. To achieve critical mass, these regions should serve as replication models for others, especially those nearby whose leaders could be included in planned seminars and workshops.

16. **Ways to Approach Increased Regional Outreach and to assist political parties:** The assessment team does not presume to offer USAID a prescriptive plan of action on regional outreach, given the brevity of its stay in Russia and the vast dimensions of both the country and challenge. It suggests that these following considerations be included in future planning:
- a. That, as heretofore, there be coordination between the Institutes in the choice of locales for concentration.
  - b. That a fresh look be taken in coming weeks at the relative importance of the regions in light of changing political realities, especially those in which the Institutes have concentrated in the past.
  - c. That greater measures of strategic planning go into planning for political activity in the regions. Such planning must be based on a clear and timely understanding of the felt requirements of the regions in question. This will involve careful probing on the spot to identify the most pressing needs of parties as well as NGOs.
  - d. That the critical mass concerns be uppermost in planners' minds. This implies, among other things, the inclusion of participants from neighboring oblasts whenever possible and the broad sharing of materials through electronic means.
  - e. That given the great differences existent between party development in the various component elements of the Federation, a special effort be made to identify and share the most effective programming tools and techniques in other parts of the country.

That in each region where an Institute makes a concentrated effort vis-à-vis the parties, a concomitant effort be made to identify effective NGO organizations and facilitating their interaction and cooperation with political parties.

## **ANNEX C**

### **ASSESSMENT PROJECT CONTACTS**

#### **In Washington DC:**

##### **Department of State**

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##### **USAID/Washington**

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Viviane Gary

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Cara McDonald

Steven Nix

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Joanna Levison

Tom Melia

Janelle Cousino (former NDI Director, Moscow)

##### **IRI**

Lorne Craner, President

Judith Van Rest

Monica Kladakis

##### **Kennan Institute**

Blair Ruble

##### **National Endowment for Democracy**

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##### **Carnegie Endowment**

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Sylvia Reed Curran  
John Brown

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**Yabloko**

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**Helsinki Committee for Human Rights**

Ludmilla Alekseyeva, President

**Institute of Political Studies**

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**Union of Right Forces**

Mikhail Shneyder

**Our Home is Russia**

Oleg Kudinov

**Solidarity Center (FTUI)**

Irene Stevenson, Director

**Information Systems for Democracy**

Georgiy Satarov, President

**Forward Russia**

Andrey Krasnikov

**Moscow Times**

Jonas Bernstein

**Open Society Institute (Soros Foundation)**

Yekaterina Genieva, President

Vyacheslav Bakhmin

**American Councils for International Education**

Lewis Madanick

**Friedrich Ebert Stiftung**

Peter Schulze, Director

## **In St. Petersburg:**

### **Russia's Democratic Choice**

Zalina Medoyeva

### **League of Women Voters**

Tatiana Dorutina, President

### **Yabloko**

Aleksandr Shishlov, State Duma member

Olga Pokrovskaya

Oleg Nesterov

### **Soldier Mothers of St. Petersburg**

Yelena Vilenskaya

### **National Press Institute**

Anna Sharogatskaya, Director

### **Writer and Activist**

Daniil Granin

### **Nevsky Angel**

Vladimir Lukyanov, President

### **Nevsky Research Center**

Anatoliy Binienko, President

### **Citizens' Watch Assn.**

Boris Pustintsev, President

## **In Tomsk:**

### **International Division, Tomsk City Administration**

Tatiana Dmitrieva, Chief

### **League of Young Politicians**

Alexsei Oblasov, President

### **Persona Grata (political consultancy)**

Lyubov Babich, President

**Tomskaya Nedelya (newspaper)**

Oleg Pletnyov, Editor

**Journalist, political activist**

Aleksandr Kovalevich

**Tomsk oblast Committee for Relations with the Regions**

Valentin Yanko, Chairman

**Tomsk City Duma**

Lev Pechurin (KPRF)

Oleg Shuteyev

**Open Society Public Access Internet site, Tomsk State University**

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**Office of External Relations for Tomsk oblast**

Yevgeniy Gaevoy, Deputy Head

**In Ekaterinburg:**

**US Consulate General**

James Bigus, CG

**Memorial, Forum of Migrants, Mothers of Invalids, Soldiers' Mothers**

Activists

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**City Duma**

Yuri Kuznetsov, Member

**Russian Peace Fund**

Olga Demidova

**SPS Leader**

Vladimir Popov

**Center for Democracy and Human Rights**

Victor Pestov

## **In Chelyabinsk:**

### **Yabloko**

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### **Cooperation (NGO)**

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### **SPS**

Leonid Vlasov, campaign manager

### **Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs**

Aleksandr Podoprighora

### **Television executive**

Stanislav Pokhlebayev

## **In Rostov-on-Don:**

### **Civic Accord (NGO)**

Mikhail Bobyshev, Chairman

### **Rostov State University**

Elena Ryaben'skaya

### **Central Electoral Commission**

Sergey Yusov, Chairman

### **Rostov oblast' Legislative Assembly**

Nikolay Belyayev, Deputy Chairman

### **Rostov City Duma**

Gennadiy Stupikov, Member (Unity)

### **State Duma staff**

Andrey Morshchiner (KPRF)

### **Political activist**

Mikhail Titenko

### **Journalist. Editor**

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## **In Samara:**

### **NDI**

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### **Government of Samara Oblast'**

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### **Administration of Samara Oblast'**

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### **USAID Regional Investment office**

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Yekaterina Lushpina

### **Chamber of Commerce, Samara**

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### **Samara City Duma**

Alla Dyomina

### **Samara Municipal Management Institute**

Grigoriy Melkov

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## **In Togliatti:**

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### **Chamber of Commerce and Industry**

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## **ANNEX D**

### **GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS USED IN THIS ASSESSMENT**

CA	Cooperative Agreement
DVR	Russia's Democratic Choice
IRI	International Republican Institute
KPRF	Communist Party of the Russian Federation
MSPS	Moscow School of Political Studies
NDI	National Democratic Institute for International Affairs
NDR	Our Home is Russia
NED	National Endowment for Democracy
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OSI	Open Society Institute (Soros)
SPS	Union of Right Forces
RLP	Russian Leadership Program–Open World
USAID	US Agency for International Development