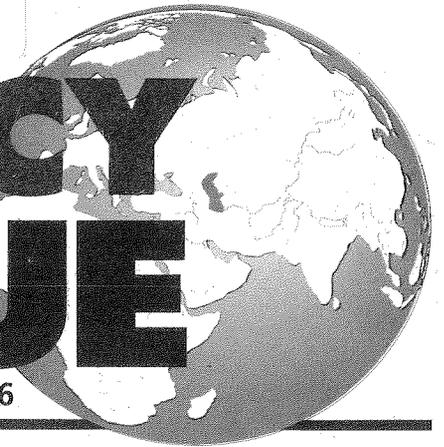


DEMOCRACY DIALOGUE

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Russian Parliamentary Elections 1995: Progress in the Process

When the new State Duma convenes in Moscow this year, it will represent a broad range of political interests in the Russian Federation. While the Western press has focused on the big Communist Party win, other equally important victories were the result of careful planning and training in the democratic process, much of it accomplished with the assistance of USAID.

"The most important thing about the election is that ideological choices were offered and the process worked," said Anne Mavity, USAID senior democracy advisor in Moscow. The election was held on time and according to law, instead of by presidential decree; 65 percent of the population voted; and results were broadcast by the Central Election Committee as they came in, using a quick count system. This was a key point, as the last time election results were announced, in 1993, they came from the Kremlin, a symbol of the old order.

The 450-seat State Duma is the lower house of the Federal Assembly, Russia's parliament. The Russian Federation is divided into 225 constituencies. One-half of State Duma deputies are elected from constituencies on a simple majority basis; the other 225 are elected on proportional representation from associations and blocs contesting the election. Forty-three electoral associations and blocs ran in this election. Each one nominated candidates in at least some of the 225 constituencies and drew up a federation-wide slate of candidates.

The election process involved filling out two different ballots, one for a single candidate to represent a voter's particular constituency, the other for the federation-wide slate of one of the 43 parties. The single candidates who won included old and new faces, many of them representatives of parties that did not gain a foothold. The 5 percent threshold needed to achieve party representation was crossed by only four of the 43 parties that ran. These were: the Communist Party, led by Gennadiy Zyuganov (21.8 per-

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International Labor Groups Foster Democratization and Economic Growth

Since the end of the Cold War the American Federation of Labor and Congress of International Organizations (AFL-CIO) and its regional institutes have been responding to new challenges in Eastern Europe and other regions of the world. Their priorities have focused on labor's role in promoting sustainable development, emphasizing trade union democracy and worker rights, and creating the capability within democratic unions for strengthening civil society. While de-emphasizing the Cold War strategy of countering the growth of communist unions worldwide, their primary em-

phasis has shifted to labor's catalytic role in the reconstruction of democratic societies, the promotion of broad-based economic growth, and protection of the environment and human health.

Some of the elements of the AFL-CIO's post-Cold War strategy include:

- Promoting policies that guarantee freedom of association and other fundamental workers' rights, including the right to bargain collectively for better wages and working conditions;

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Decentralization from the Ground Up: Central American Programs Empower Local Governments

USAID has been involved in decentralization efforts in Central America since the 1960s, but has significantly altered the way in which it undertakes these activities. Early attempts by international organizations to facilitate decentralization and the empowerment of local government met with limited success, because the channels needed to redistribute political power had not yet been created. As the governments of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua have made the transition from military to civilian control, they have come under serious political, social, and economic pressure to shift the distribution of power. This has been accomplished slowly, through decentralization and municipal development.

Municipal Development Institutes (MDIs), designed to provide technical assistance, training, and financial support to municipal governments, grew out of early efforts to decentral-

ize. Typically, however, the MDIs promoted their own political agenda, based on controlling rather than empowering municipal governments. Predictably, assistance for municipal

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development was quite ineffective through this top-down approach.

Consequently, one of the most salient lessons learned in the course of the decentralization experience was the importance of the bottom-up approach, adopted by USAID in recent years. Without the collective will and consensus of the locally-elected leaders, there would be little if any decentralization in Central America today. The implicit premise underlying decentralization is that access to political decision-making is fundamental to democracy, and that municipal governments are closest to the people and can ultimately be more responsive to local needs. At the same time, local governments can increase citizen participation in the decision-making process.

In light of this premise, in 1987 USAID began funding the Municipalities in Action (MEA) program in

El Salvador. This program identifies 262 municipalities and charges them with the responsibility for reconstructing war-damaged infrastructure and redressing long-standing, deep-seated grievances, such as the lack of voice in local affairs and basic services such as water, health care, and education. Since 1989, municipal governments in El Salvador have implemented more than 10,000 projects, primarily in education, transportation, water, and electricity.

USAID has also pushed for increased citizen participation in decentralization efforts in El Salvador. One important economic outcome of this action has been the discovery that by using local material and labor, municipal infrastructure projects cost on average 44.8 percent less than comparable centrally-funded projects. In addition, more candidates are running in mayoral elections than for the legislature, which suggests that people believe the mayor's office holds more power and can effect more change at the local level. However, there are still some concerns that political party affiliation may conflict with democratic progress; there is an effort to de-link municipal elections from national ones, for example.

In Honduras the progress of democracy has been aided by the 1990 Municipal Law, which allows municipalities tremendous latitude in taxation, revenue generation, and investment decision-making. This law, supported by USAID and other donors, provides for an enabling environment for municipal leaders and municipal associations. The municipal association, which serves as a forum for mayors, is more powerful in Honduras than in El Salvador. However, there has been less citizen participation in Honduras, a situation USAID is trying to improve. Despite



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Women In Politics: Breaking Down Barriers

The Asia Foundation Program Fosters Greater Political Participation

Women's political empowerment is an absolute key to making progress in all other sectors and to foster democratic development, said Carol Yost, director of The Asia Foundation's (TAF's) Women in Politics (WIP) program. "Women must participate in decision-making at all levels."

Since 1993, TAF has been working in collaboration with USAID to increase women's access to and participation in politics in the Asia-Pacific region. Because of the success of the project, USAID funding will shortly shift to the wider Global Women in Politics program (see box).

The WIP program aims to reduce the barriers to women's full participation in the political process as voters, advocates, and leaders, both in and outside of government. Currently operating in Nepal, Thailand, Korea, Mongolia, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, the South Pacific, Bangladesh, Cambodia, and the Philippines, WIP builds networks between individuals and organizations through regional seminars and workshops. These meetings enable women to share their experiences in effecting political change that can help participants to meet challenges in their own countries. At the first workshop, held in 1994, the Asia-Pacific Women in Politics (APWIP) Network was founded, which is housed in the Center for Analysis and Change (CAC) in Bangladesh.

The APWIP Network concentrates on developing leadership skills, and incorporating the views and perspectives of women into policy agendas. It also works to advocate, establish, and enforce a legal framework that promotes women's political involvement. CAC's Yasmeen Murshed, an active member of APWIP, has said, "Remember, if you only have the man's perspective, you only have half a perspective."



Participants at the subregional meeting of Asia-Pacific Women in Politics, in Bangladesh, February 1995

"We are finding there are many common barriers to women's participation in politics," Yost said. These include traditional attitudes that tend to regard politics as "men's work," and a sense that politics is not related to women's lives. In addition, it has been a prevalent belief worldwide that politics is a dirty business, and therefore unsuitable for women, she said.

Because of these commonalities, many WIP strategies translate across borders. Increasing women's independent access to information is a main goal, and one training sequence that WIP has found works in every culture is an inverted pyramid. The process begins with raising awareness at the family

level and moves to the public sphere, where women are encouraged to run for local political office. "Women simply cannot afford to sit out while the important decisions are being made," Yost emphasized, especially when it comes to issues related to resource allocation, such as health care, education, and access to credit.

USAID has supported the goals of WIP through financial assistance for a variety of activities in the region, including workshops, publications, and training seminars. For example, in Bangladesh, the CAC drafted recommendations on how

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The success of the Women in Politics Program led to development of USAID's Global Women in Politics (GWIP) program, a partnership between The Asia Foundation, the African-American Institute, American-Mideast Educational and Training Services, Inc. (AMIDEAST), and PARTICIPA, a Chilean NGO. With funding from USAID, these four partners work in their respective regions to implement the goals of the GWIP program through cooperating organizations. The GWIP program goals are: 1) to increase awareness, strengthen advocacy, and expand access to positions and processes; 2) to promote equitable laws, policies, and practices; 3) to strengthen regional capacity to effectively implement and enforce laws, policies, and decisions; and 4) to promote networking that will facilitate transfer of ideas, strategies, and resources, and that will build regional and international solidarity among women and women's groups.

Russian Elections

Continued from page 1

cent); Vladimir Zhirinovskiy's ultranationalist Liberal Democratic Party (11.29 percent); Prime Minister Victor Chernomyrdin's centrist Our Home is Russia Party (9.74 percent); and the liberal Yabloko Party of economist Grigory Yavlinsky (7.03 percent). "It is important to note that these four parties represent a spectrum in political terms," Mavity said. "You have the left, the center, the communists, and the far right." In addition, the results could spur consolidation of the political party system among the 39 parties that did not make it, which would be a positive step, she added.

To help develop and oversee the democratic process in Russia, USAID funded a number of cross-regional and multitermed training projects, which were undertaken by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), the International Republican Institute (IRI), and the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI). Each of these groups reported general success in most areas

In Fiscal Year 1995, the Center for Democracy and Governance awarded a multi-year grant to IFES, NDI, and IRI to conduct elections support. The grant will assist selected countries around the world to promote open and participatory political and electoral processes that reflect the will of the electorate. To that end, the three organizations will provide technical assistance for local NGOs involved in election promotion and monitoring; assessments of the pre-election environment and electoral administration; training of poll workers and NGOs; and elections commodities, such as ballots and ballot boxes.

of training and elections monitoring; IFES concentrated on campaign regulation and technical aspects of voting, such as development of the State Automated System, an advanced automated ballot-counting system. "The work that has been done has been well received and the elections were fairly well run," said former Ambassador Nelson Ledsky, NDI regional director for the former Soviet Union.

had a negative impact on the country. A national survey on the problems faced by Russia today, conducted by IFES in July 1995, showed overwhelming emphasis on the economic crisis, followed closely by the related issue of quality of life.

"The state of the economy is always key," said Judy Van Rest, IRI regional program director for the Commonwealth of Independent States. "Everyone had a good idea of the mood of the electorate, so while disappointing, the results were not a surprise."

Indeed, democracy can be a painful process, and in Russia the older generation in particular has suffered under Yeltsin's economic reforms as pensions do not meet current costs of living. This segment of the population gave its large, disillusioned, even nostalgic vote for the Communist Party. In contrast, the younger

people turned out in fewer numbers but tended to vote for the more liberal, reform-minded candidates and democratic parties, both Ledsky and Van Rest agreed.

The State Duma elections could anticipate public opinion projections for the June presidential election. As Russia gears up for the election, IRI and NDI will continue to focus on the long term, continuing programs in elections training and political party development across regions, emphasizing problem areas such as campaign finance. IRI will also continue its youth and women's programs with get-out-the-vote efforts and youth auxiliaries. "There is still a lot to be done," said Mavity, "but the voters are definitely catching on to the democratic process."



Russian Election Posters: "Vote for the Future of Your Children"

The results were not a surprise to election watchers. Opinion polls credited the Communist Party with 12-20 percent of voting intentions just prior to the election. In part, the Communist victory is a vote of no-confidence in President Boris Yeltsin. The population perceives that many of the economic reforms instituted by Yeltsin over the past four years have

NDI and IRI on the Russian Election Front

To strengthen the capabilities of democratic political parties and to develop their regional structures, NDI and IRI have been working in-country since the early 1990s. With the common goal of supporting the development of a stable multiparty system, and complementary approaches, these two organizations helped build the framework that supports the budding democratic political process in Russia.

"The basics of campaigning and political party building are fairly universal," said IRI's Judy Van Rest. "We've seen evidence that these principles are applicable around the world."



Counting ballots in St. Petersburg

IRI efforts were mainly concentrated on party building, parliamentary training, a program for women, and a program for youth.

"We found that women and youth had been left by the wayside after the fall of communism," said Van Rest. "Our programs were designed to help them become aware of their duties as citizens and to be actively involved in the political process as candidates, party activists, or volunteers." These programs included seminars and training and the interactive exercises central to the program:

- As a result of a series of IRI training seminars in St. Petersburg, an independent coalition of women conducted and organized candidate forums to

educate the public on candidates and electoral responsibility.

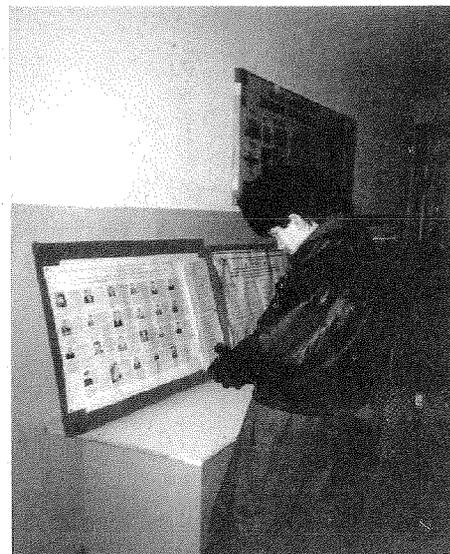
- IRI conducted polling seminars in which participants designed questions for the poll, conducted the poll themselves, and learned to analyze and apply results. IRI also held "training the trainer" seminars in which Russians learn to design seminars and conduct training themselves.

In the cities where IRI and NDI conducted training seminars, 49 percent of the single-mandate seats were won by reformists (nationwide, the total was 19 percent). It is important to note that although the communists and nationalists did well, the reformist candidates actually gained three seats in the parliament and now hold 119.

This is encouraging, said NDI's Nelson Ledsky, especially as the past few years have been so difficult for Russians. "Places undergoing the least change, such as the agricultural sector, voted for Communists and Nationalists," Ledsky said, "but it is encouraging that the vote of the younger people tended to go to Liberals and Democrats." This is cause for hope, he said, but also an indication that there is much work to be done.

In Russia since 1992, NDI has conducted activities in five main areas:

- Training political parties across the political spectrum by helping to develop national networks and structure;
- Working to build monitoring organizations. NDI trained 100,000 monitors and established temporary support and training centers for monitoring efforts in three of Russia's largest cities;
- Working with civic groups, helping to get them into the political process by showing them how to move into advocacy and bring their agendas forward;



Choosing candidates in Moscow

- Producing, publishing, and widely distributing a pre-election report, used by international monitors; and
- Working in local governments in an effort to begin the process of democratic reform. NDI worked to strengthen local political participation by organizing town meetings and other outreach activities.

National organization and relaying a coherent message form the foundation of an effective political campaign. The sheer size and character of the Russian Federation were the source of the major difficulties in this area. "It is hard to develop a message from Moscow that is applicable across the country, which makes building a campaign rather difficult," Ledsky said.

During the next few months, IRI and NDI will continue to focus on regional and local work, helping in the process of coalition-building and consolidation of those democratic parties that did not make it to the State Duma this time. That a majority of people are still searching for something is understandable, Ledsky said, "but the democratic process is clearly catching on and succeeding." Van Rest agreed: "The Russian people very much want democracy and the people we are working with are starting to make the difference." □

CONFERENCE NOTES

Conference of Chief Justices of the Americas

The second conference of Chief Justices of the Americas convened in Washington, D.C., on October 23-26, 1995. The conference, which received funding from USAID, focused on judicial ethics, judicial independence, due process in the Americas, the organization of justice in the Americas in the 21st century, and international judicial tribunals and their impact on national courts. Representatives from the supreme courts of 24 countries in Latin America and the United States attended the conference.

Several leading officials from the U.S. judicial system spoke at the conference. Chief Justice William Rehnquist, in his welcoming address, urged delegates to develop programs that would help reforms filter down to all levels of their respective court systems. Justice Stephen Breyer presented a paper on judicial independence, and Justice Anthony Kennedy presented one on judicial ethics. Justices Sandra Day O'Connor and Antonin Scalia participated on conference panels. Representing the executive branch, Attorney General Janet Reno and Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Alexander Watson also attended.

On the final day of the conference, the delegates voted unanimously to approve a charter for a new Organization of Supreme Courts of the Americas. The charter must be ratified by the judiciaries of 15 countries before the organization can become operational. Once that is done, a permanent secretariat will be established in Panama. The new organization will work to exchange information and technical ex-

pertise on a wide range of subjects related to the independence of the judiciary and the rule of law, and plans to meet next in Panama in early 1997.

For more information about the Conference of Chief Justices of the Americas, contact the Interjudicial Affairs Office, Thurgood Marshall Federal Judicial Center, One Columbus Circle, NE, Washington, D.C. 20002; phone (202) 273-4161; fax (202) 273-4019; or e-mail (japple@fjc.gov).

Shattuck and Atwood Speak to Democracy Officers

Democracy officers from USAID field offices, USAID/Washington, and the Department of State, and representatives from various non-governmental organizations and academic institutions gathered in Washington, D.C., this past July for the second annual Democracy Officers' Conference. The three-day conference, convened by USAID's Center for Democracy and Governance (DG Center), took a close look at how the concepts and goals of sustainable democracy fit within the USAID and foreign policy framework.

The objectives of the conference were threefold: update officers on Agency policy and implementation practice including services, priorities, and methods in use; review experience, and disseminate results/lessons learned across regions on selected topics; and provide an opportunity for team building among democracy officers. The conference included presentations on USAID policy direction, democratic strategic frameworks, methods for assessing the press in the democracy and governance sector, political party assistance, and civil society. It also aimed to familiarize field officers with the services provided by the DG Center.

In his conference address, USAID Administrator J. Brian Atwood underlined the importance of democracy to the Agency's overall development goals. He said that gains in other areas

such as economic growth can be lost if the proper democratic institutions are not in place, and that human potential can best be realized through participation in the development process.

John Shattuck, U.S. assistant secretary for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, also spoke at the conference. He emphasized democracy as the centerpiece for U.S. foreign policy because its advancement is fundamental to the strategic interests of the United States. Democratic societies, he said, are more likely to respect human rights, observe international laws, and engage in free market economies, while being less likely to wage war.

The consensus among the field officers was that the conference was particularly important because it increased both their knowledge of the rapidly growing field of democratic development and understanding of their own responsibilities within the USAID democracy and government sector. □

Labor

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- Establishing viable and self-sustaining trade union organizations whose mission is to defend the economic rights of their members, and participating effectively in the policy formulation process at the grass-roots and national levels;
- Collaborating with host governments to assure the participation of labor groups in the promotion of the rule of law, democratic governance, civil society, and democratic elections. As mass-based organizations, trade union organizations must be afforded the opportunity to be allies in such efforts and to actively contribute to political and economic stability;
- Seeking to establish more productive relationships, both at the company-plant level and with business groups in general in order to create better living standards for workers and their families, and for trade unions to participate vigorously in

the creation of strategies emphasizing broad-based growth.

In line with the fundamental shift of AFL-CIO priorities and strategies, the regional institutes are redefining their relationship with USAID in the core areas of democracy and other areas through dialogue with all of the centers of the Global Bureau and at the mission level. The four regional institutes, with USAID support and encouragement, are defining their activities to emphasize labor's unique role in all of the areas of development.

The successes of the regional institutes' programs illustrated below are signs that the AFL-CIO shift in strategy is paying off in several countries and regions of the world.

In El Salvador, the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD) developed a program to help female workers learn to use the political process to improve their working conditions. AIFLD has been working with COMUTRAS, the women's committee of the Salvadoran trade union national centers and independent unions. Through COMUTRAS, working women used political action to get existing labor laws to function properly. The women went out into their communities to tell their stories and create pressure to defend their right to organize, receive dignified treatment on the job, and receive health care for themselves and their families.

The African-American Labor Center (AALC) has been working with labor organizations in countries such as South Africa, Zambia, and Mali, where unions played a major role in developing support and pressure for political reform. In South Africa, with AALC support, the labor movement led an extensive voter education and mobilization campaign throughout the country, and conducted a training-of-trainers program for nearly 1,500 unionists in election monitoring. And as a result of an AALC training program, female unionists in South Africa formed the first South African School for Trade Union

Women, which promotes women's activism and encourages them to move into the decision-making structures of their unions.

The Asian-American Free Labor Institute (AAFLI), recognizing that the growing work force of women in Asia has not been represented by traditional trade unions, has refocused its activities to target and empower female workers. AAFLI has developed a series of activities that will lead to a democratically managed, independent labor union run by and for women, enabling female garment workers to develop the skills and resources needed to collectively bargain over wages and working conditions and to access the law. With USAID assistance, AAFLI helped to form the Bangladesh Independent Garment-Workers Union, which represents one million women working in Bangladesh's garment sector.

Working with Poland's Solidarity trade union, the Free Trade Union Institute has helped establish Consulting and Negotiating Bureaus (known by the Polish acronym BKN) in each industrial sector to help ease workers through the difficult stages of the country's transition to a free market economy. The BKNs provide unions with advice and negotiating assistance on restructuring and privatization. They also assist workers who are unfairly dismissed or harassed by management. The BKNs were directly responsible for drafting

and negotiating three key pieces of labor legislation, which were ratified by Poland's parliament. Another significant BKN accomplishment was a program that gathered more than one million signatures from citizens in support of a new constitution.

The AFL-CIO's post-Cold War strategy document entitled "Labor and USAID Strategy" states that "the proposition that citizens of every nation must be free to organize, speak their minds, and elect their leaders...is more widely accepted than ever before in world history." But the existence of free trade unions depends on the strength of democracy and freedom of association, and programs that promote these concepts will continue to be important part of the strategies of the international labor institutes.

In response to the AFL-CIO strategy document, USAID Administrator Brian Atwood emphasized that one of the ways in which the U.S. Congress encourages USAID to accomplish its mission is to work, as much as possible, through the private sector, including free labor unions. In addition, he noted that the U.S. labor movement can be an effective force in achieving sustainable development goals. Atwood added, "I am encouraged by the creative thinking of the AFL-CIO...I hope [USAID] can be equally creative in thinking of new ways in which it can tap the great strengths of the U.S. free labor movement." □

"I am encouraged by the creative thinking of the AFL-CIO...I hope [USAID] can be equally creative in thinking of new ways in which it can tap the great strengths of the U.S. free labor movement."

J. Brian Atwood

Decentralization

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these problems, Honduras has become a Central American model for municipal management, since decentralization has been achieved in the country, despite its relative economic poverty.

In each of the Central American countries, national municipal associations have played a substantial role in advocating the legislative reforms needed for greater administrative, political, and financial autonomy for municipal governments. At the regional level, the lead role in advocating decentralization and municipal development has been assumed by the Federación de Municipios del Istmo Centro-Americano (FEMICA). Founded in 1990, FEMICA is a professional association of over 1,000 mayors from throughout the region. FEMICA, together with the national municipal associations, advocates for the strengthening of democracy by promoting decentralization, requiring the transfer of authority, responsibility, and resources to the level of government closest to the people: the municipality.

To assist FEMICA, USAID initiated the Local Government Regional Outreach Strategy (LOGROS) project in 1992. LOGROS was designed specifically to bring regional experience and opinion to bear on construction of a policy framework to address country-

level problems, and to take advantage of economies of scale in the cross-fertilization of ideas and in the identification, testing, and application of new approaches to solving common municipal problems. The heart of the LOGROS project has been promotion of decentralization and municipal autonomy through the development of a regional environment for policy change.

Decentralization projects aim to empower citizens at the local level, to ensure that—as often as possible—those who make the decisions are those who are affected by them. Broadening public participation, particularly in financial decision-making, has given Central American citizens a tangible stake in democracy, positioning them in a central role to improve their own conditions. □

Women in Politics

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to reduce obstacles that hinder the success of female parliamentary candidates. The recommendations led to development of a comprehensive training program covering campaign management, fund-raising, media relations, and coordination of volunteers.

USAID funding has also enabled the monthly publication of the *Gender Watch* newsletter in Thailand,

which informs citizens of gender issues and holds leaders accountable for how they vote on related bills. The funding also helped a northern Thailand women's group train several hundred women to run for local office. The result has been an average increase from one percent to 14 percent representation in local elective bodies in five provinces. With financial support from member organizations, the APWIP Network also produces a quarterly newsletter.

"We are talking about a fundamental shift of power, but a gradual one," Yost insisted. It will take time and resources, but then, "there is no reason women can't represent the interests of both men and women," she added. □

For more information on the Global Women in Politics Program, contact Melissa Brown, USAID Global Bureau, Center for Democracy and Governance, Room 5258 NS, Washington, D.C. 20523; phone (202) 736-7979; fax (202) 736-7892; or e-mail (mebrown@usaid.gov)

For more information on the Asia-Pacific Women in Politics Program, contact The Asia Foundation, 1990 M Street, NW, Suite 610, Washington, D.C. 20036; phone (202) 223-5268; fax (202) 785-4582; or e-mail (TAFWIP1@igc.apc.org)



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