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PROGRAM STRATEGY

In the six-month reporting period from January through June 1995, NDI developed a domestic monitoring program in Kyrgyzstan and continued field operations in the shifting political landscape of Kazakhstan. NDI's program strategy for this period was:

In Kazakhstan:

- continue to enhance the effectiveness and professionalism of the Parliament;
- continue work to strengthen the role of political parties and nongovernmental groups within the political process; and
- investigate the possibility of developing a civic education program with nongovernmental groups and independent activists outside the capital of Almaty.

In Kyrgyzstan:

- help local nonpartisan organizations monitor the February 5, 1995, parliamentary elections;
- strengthen the efforts of domestic monitors by facilitating their relations with the Central Election Commission (CEC) and the dissemination of monitoring reports; and
- assess the possibility of developing a program for the newly elected Parliament.

KYRGYZSTAN

Program Inputs

In response to requests received during a training seminar for political parties in the southern city of Osh in September 1994, NDI sought to assist local groups to monitor Kyrgyzstan's February 1995 parliamentary elections, and runoff elections in late February and March. Kyrgyzstan's election law limited polling place observation to candidate

representatives and "trusted faces." In accordance with the law, therefore, NDI made training available to all interested citizens, but focused on preparing these groups in particular to monitor electoral activity on polling day.

To conduct training, NDI established a partnership with the Kyrgyz-American Bureau on Human Rights and Rule of Law, a local nongovernmental organization based in Bishkek. NDI used the Bureau's network of contacts among candidate representatives to form multipartisan monitoring coalitions. The Bureau organized logistics and mobilized participants for training sessions, and collaborated in developing supporting materials and conducting training. Eight separate training sessions were conducted from January 24 to 27 in Bishkek, for approximately 60 participants representing 15 political parties and candidates. An additional sequence of training sessions was conducted in Osh between January 28 and February 2 for approximately 75 representatives affiliated mainly with Erkin Kyrgyzstan and the Social Democratic Party, and students from Osh University. Additional training sessions were later conducted in conjunction with the runoff elections.

Training addressed how to apply for credentials; the rights of monitors at the polling site; the use of the mobile ballot box; election law provisions concerning "interference"; vote tabulation and parallel protocols; the role of district election commissions in resolving election day disputes; and division of labor among monitors on polling day.

In addition to conducting domestic monitor training, NDI sought to facilitate communications between domestic monitors and the CEC. NDI collected complaints submitted by candidates to the CEC and distributed copies to representatives of the OSCE, the UN, the International Republican Institute (IRI), the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) and the U.S. Embassy in Bishkek.

Representatives of NDI and IRI met with the CEC's Deputy Chairman to express concern over election-day issues that warranted the attention of the Commission and clarification before runoff elections on February 19. A letter issued jointly by the Institutes urged the Commission to publicize again explanations of the rights and responsibilities of monitors, and to alert precinct-level election commission officials to prohibitions on their presence at polling sites and district election commission proceedings. The letter also recommended clarification of the jurisdiction of courts in connection with election-related grievances, and penalties for willful violation of the election law by public officials. A copy of the letter is attached.

The monitoring program benefitted from the combined efforts of several NDI staff members. John Karren, field representative for Central Asia, coordinated the project; Ken Payne, a political trainer in NDI's Latvia office, and Dik Saalfeld, a civic trainer in NDI's office in Macedonia, conducted training sessions in Osh and Bishkek. Askar Tapalov, Khalida Isaeva and Jibek Iskakova, NDI's local staff, provided training support and interpretation. Dan Finn, a parliamentary trainer in the Almaty office, and Joanna Levison,

Program Officer for Central Asia in Washington, observed activities on and around election day.

In April, May and June, John Karren returned to Kyrgyzstan to conduct preliminary interviews with local activists, newly-elected deputies, and U.S. Embassy and AID officials about the possibilities for programming in the post-election period.

Impacts/Assessment

The monitoring effort found great receptivity among candidates, their representatives, nonpartisan activists and voters in Kyrgyzstan. This receptivity was translated into direct political activity by those monitors who attended training sessions and observed polling site activity on election day. While it would be impossible to demonstrate any direct relationship between the monitoring activity and electoral outcomes, NDI believes that it can identify several significant effects. On an individual level, monitors found a direct way to participate in the political process and use institutional (i.e., the election law) and organizational means to challenge aspects of the status quo. Monitors gained experience in creating a disciplined and coordinated organization of citizen volunteers, and in combining their efforts and personal resources to achieve a self-defined objective. They also gained experience in advocacy, both in relation to their own officials in electoral commissions and on local courts, and in connection with representatives of the international community who were observing the elections. On the government side, officials within institutional structures were confronted with the phenomenon of accountability to public expectations of responsibility and competence in the performance of their jobs.

The monitoring program also achieved institutional results. The most shining example of civic activism and institutional response was the January 11 "clarification," the CEC's answer to the petition submitted in December by the monitoring coalition. Also, the ability of NGO and party activists to spot, prevent and report fraudulent activity on election day advanced the development of their own organizations. The considerable effectiveness with which the Kyrgyz-American Bureau on Human Rights mobilized volunteers, trained monitors, disseminated information and documents and collected monitoring reports demonstrated to foreign observers and local citizens alike the great potential for political activism within Kyrgyzstan's emerging nongovernment sector.

Balancing the benefits, the monitoring program experienced several difficulties. Principal among these was time, or the lack thereof, since the interval between the announcement of elections and election day left NDI with just over three months to work. Certainly, more time would have enabled NDI to expand the regional scope of the training, identify and mobilize greater numbers of monitors, and include the pre-election period as well as polling day activity within the scope of the project. More time would have also allowed NDI to assist candidates in incorporating a monitoring component into their campaign strategies. Instead, since the pre-election period was abbreviated, candidates focused on the

competitive element of the campaign and ignored the necessity of following through to then ensure free and fair balloting at the polls.

Finally, there were inadequacies on the part of government structures and the CEC. Fundamental elements of electoral preparation and administration, including the establishment of monitors' rights, electoral districts, grievance procedures and the role of the courts were incomplete until 30 days before the elections and, in many cases, remain unresolved on election day. These failures of the CEC deprived candidates, political parties, civic groups, international organizations, election administrators and voters from participating effectively in the process.

Action Plan

NDI has made no final decision regarding future programming in Kyrgyzstan. Interviews conducted by Field Representative Karren in Kyrgyzstan in the immediate post-election period, however, and discussions held by the Washington staff have helped to identify several options. Principal among these is a program to help institutionalize and professionalize the newly elected Parliament. NDI will assess these options and, taking into consideration priorities throughout the Central Asian region, will define its commitment to Kyrgyzstan by summer's end.

KAZAKHSTAN

Program Inputs

NDI continued efforts initiated late in the fall of 1994 to develop a program for the new Parliament. In late January, Dan Finn, NDI's parliamentary trainer, wrote and organized commentary on a bill under review to establish new rules and procedures. Stan Bach, a researcher at the Library of Congress, also contributed to the analysis. The final document was distributed to approximately 40 faction leaders, committee chairpersons, parliamentary leadership and staff as a means of promoting informed discussion and debate of the draft. During January and February, Finn conducted meetings with recipients of the analysis to follow-up on the document, and explored opportunities for consultation and advice on other issues.

In early March, NDI decided to withdraw Finn and terminate the parliamentary program. Extensive consultations with parliamentary deputies, civic activists and U.S. Embassy and AID officials failed to persuade NDI that it was possible to develop a useful ongoing program with Parliament. The dissolution of Parliament by President Nazarbaev later that month put any question of further parliamentary programming to rest for the time being.

NDI persisted in exploring new program opportunities following Parliament's demise. In May and June, John Karren conducted meetings with government officials, former

parliamentary deputies, civic activists, journalists and U.S. Embassy and AID officials to solicit their views on political developments and ideas for programs.

Impacts/Assessment

Despite the efforts of its highly skilled trainer, NDI was unable to develop the set of collaborative relationships necessary to sustain a parliamentary program. Several reasons may be adduced to explain why. The political environment inside Kazakhstan was sufficiently controlled to prevent more than a handful of exceptionally intrepid politicians from seeking the guidance that NDI programs are designed to provide. Likewise, the political system continues to reward compliance and predictability, and therefore discourages parliamentarians from introducing innovations or efficiencies into their work. Finally, few parliamentarians demonstrated genuine interest in building and improving the institution.

In the aftermath of Parliament's dissolution, NDI has failed to identify alternative areas for sustained programming. Many of NDI's former partners in the political sphere retreated into silence; the promulgation of restrictive legislation, coupled with the President's newly acquired prerogative to rule by decree warned others against undertaking new initiatives. By the close of June, the situation had not improved.

Action Plan

NDI will use the month of July to survey regions beyond Almaty for programming opportunities. Field Representative Karren will travel to Kyzl Orda, Jambul, Aralsk and Chimkent to ascertain whether political conditions in these cities are more accommodating than in Almaty, and whether sufficient needs and interests exist in these areas to sustain an NDI program over the next workplan term. Special attention will be paid to the prospect of conducting civic education. NDI will make a final determination about the continuation of its program in Kazakhstan by mid-August.

Budget

Budget figures for the reporting period are attached.