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USAID Semiannual Report
RUSSIA
Associate Cooperative Agreement DGC-A-09-01-0004
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I. SUMMARY

From May 1 to December 31, 2001, NDI began work under a new USAID cooperative agreement in the Russian Federation. The bulk of activity in this period was concentrated on supporting the election monitoring and advocacy activities of the VOICE Association for the Defense of Voters' Rights, which expanded to include 15 local affiliates across Russia. NDI's political party programming focused on consultations with national-level leaders of the Yabloko and SPS parties concerning relations between the federal and local levels and between the parties and their elected officials. The Institute led discussions with members of several factions of the State Duma regarding proposed reforms to Russia's federal election law, and also maintained contact with the Unity and Fatherland parties regarding possible future training.

All of NDI's activities during this period correspond to USAID's Strategic Objective 2.1: "Increased, better informed citizen participation in political and economic decision-making," Intermediate Results 2.1.1.2: "National and regional political parties' infrastructures developed," and 2.1.3.1: "More effective NGO advocacy of people's needs."

II. BACKGROUND

A. Political Situation in Russia

In 2001, political pluralism and civic freedoms in Russia were under greater pressure than at any time since the Soviet era. A new law on political parties, passed by the State Duma in the fall, introduced restrictions on the role and structure of parties, limited the number of groups eligible to compete in elections, and gave the government authority over many aspects of party development that had previously been left to the electorate to decide. Early in the year, the former "party of power" Our Home Is Russia (NDR) formally dissolved, and most of its members joined the pro-presidential Unity Party. In the second half of the year, Unity effectively absorbed the Fatherland-All Russia bloc, once an independent force in the State Duma. Unity and the Communist Party, now Russia's two largest and most powerful political groupings, have colluded to marginalize pro-democratic parties, chief among them Yabloko and the Union of Right Forces (SPS).

Public participation in the election process dwindled during the year, as voters increasingly perceived local and regional elections to be dominated by the administrative resources of local incumbents. Elections were tainted by opaque and often corrupt campaign financing, as well as unbalanced public information about political candidates distributed by corrupt and/or biased

media organizations. The outcome of several local and regional elections was swayed by the influence of regional governors who openly endorsed favored candidates and permitted the illegal use of government resources in campaigns.

Civic activists and independent journalists continued to endure harassment at the hands of government officials in 2001. With the government takeover of independent television network TV6 in January 2002, all major media outlets had fallen under state control. Journalists who criticized government policy endured sometimes violent harassment. Civic organizations, particularly at the local and regional level, remained generally reluctant to engage government authorities in advocacy on behalf of their members and constituents. Regional administrations created various “civic chambers” or councils, which promised privileged status to certain groups in exchange for their loyalty to the governors. At the same time, with the number of NGOs expanding, several national groups exercised strong and independent voices in the political arena.

The terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11 resulted in a shift in relations between the U.S. and Russia. The Bush administration, which had applied pressure to the Russian government earlier in the year over its lack of attention to corruption and human rights abuses, began to court Putin’s government as an ally in the war on terror. Nevertheless, abuses of civic freedoms and human rights continued in Russia, and non-governmental support to Russian democratic activists became even more crucial to the protection of political pluralism and citizen participation in government.

B. NDI in Russia

Since late 1990, NDI has conducted programs to support democratic development and political pluralism in Russia. For most of that time, these programs have focused on institutional support for democratic political parties. NDI has sought to help parties become strong, independent advocates of the public interest within government at the federal and local level. The Institute has provided training and consultation to thousands of political activists on long-term party building, strategic planning, communication, coordination, voter outreach and campaign planning. It has also encouraged and facilitated alliances among these parties. In addition to USAID funding, NDI has received a grant from the National Endowment for Democracy to support political party training outside Moscow in 2001 and 2002.

Within the State Duma, NDI has consulted with democratically-oriented factions on legislative and constitutional issues, as well as constituency relations. NDI parliamentary programs have worked to promote transparency and accountability in the legislature by advising parliamentary committees on key legislative issues and procedures. They have also aimed to strengthen democratic factions in the assembly by building lawmakers’ skills in promoting legislative initiatives, building factions, and conducting constituent outreach. Since late 2000, NDI has cooperated with the newly constituted Duma Commission on Ethics on formulating a code of ethics for the parliament.

From the outset of its work in Russia, NDI has worked with the country’s civic organizations to help them develop into effective public advocates outside government. NDI has provided civic NGOs with training in organizing skills, management, resource development, coalition-building,

advocacy methods and trainer development. In late 1999, with NDI's assistance, a group of seven well-established national civic organizations created the VOICE Association for the Defense of Voters' Rights, a nationwide advocacy network dedicated to promoting free and fair elections and transparent, accountable local government. By the beginning of the current cooperative agreement, VOICE had established five small local coalitions made up of several independent NGOs and branches of national advocacy groups. All the member organizations continued to function independently, while uniting through VOICE to pursue citizen participation issues that are important to all of them. By May 2001, VOICE had already trained and deployed hundreds of pollwatchers in several local and regional elections, and had established a wide range of voter education programs to promote greater participation in elections and greater openness and transparency in the electoral process. NDI's work with VOICE attracted funding not only from USAID, but also from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, which provided a one-year grant to support VOICE during the crucial early stages of its regional expansion in 2000 and 2001.

As a complement to NDI's work with political parties and civic groups, the Institute has worked with local governments in several Russian regions to help officials cooperate with citizens and political parties to solve local problems. Most recently, since 1999, NDI has maintained an office in the city of Samara, established under a separate USAID cooperative agreement, through which it has organized activities to promote citizen participation in local government decision making. The most prominent of these projects have been public-private task forces, composed of local NGO and business leaders, which have cooperated with local governments to formulate recommendations for the development of internal tourism in the Samara region.

NDI's outreach programs have informed civic, government, and political leaders across the country about democratic development. NDI's quarterly newsletter, with information about NDI training programs and interviews with political and civic figures, now reaches more than 6,200 political and civic activists across Russia. The newsletter has proven to be an effective and relatively inexpensive method of maintaining regular contact with past participants in NDI's programs and keeping them informed about the Institute's activities. The newsletter mailings also give NDI a means of distributing research materials on democracy development and information about the activities of Russian democratic activists.

III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

A. Political Party Development

In the second half of 2001, NDI programming under this agreement focused on issue-based work with democratically oriented factions in the State Duma and on consultations with democratic parties to develop party-building strategies.

Work in the parliament included consultation with the Duma Commission on Ethics, a committee made up of members of all major Duma factions, which was in the process of drafting a first-ever code of ethics for the assembly. NDI also hosted lawmakers from several different Duma factions in a roundtable discussion on proposed amendments to the Duma's new federal election law.

NDI's work with political parties was limited during most of 2002 because of the lack of a resident director of party programs. The programs that were conducted were concerned mainly with improving parties' abilities to build effective relations with regional branches, develop their managers and activists, and organize for regional elections. Most party work was conducted with the Union of Right Forces. Activities with the Yabloko Party were limited because of concerns within the party as to how its cooperation with NDI would be affected by Russia's new law on political parties. However, Yabloko has affirmed that it is committed to cooperation with NDI and hopes to pursue a more intensive schedule of programs in 2002.

Throughout this period, alongside Moscow-based party programs, NDI organized complementary training programs directly with regional party branches in the Astrakhan, Leningrad, and Moscow Oblasts under a separate grant from the National Endowment for Democracy.

Activities

- In May, the Duma Ethics Commission held a meeting to discuss its project to draft a code of ethics for the parliament. At the meeting, NDI proposed a program of cooperation with the Commission. NDI proposed to assist the Commission in drafting the code of conduct and in organizing two parliamentary hearings on the draft code. While NDI has maintained contact with the Commission in the months since that meeting, a final agreement on cooperation has not yet been reached.
- In July, NDI conducted a roundtable with SPS's newly formed party building team and regional leaders. The program was conducted by Geoffrey Harper of the British Conservative Party together with SPS regional representatives Zalina Medoeva from Leningrad Oblast, Denis Masentsev from Saratov and Valery Shutov from Moscow Oblast, all of whom had participated in previous NDI training programs. The meeting focused on means by which parties interact with their regional activists and elected representatives in Russia and Britain. The agenda included discussions of the overall structure of the party, the role of members in forming party policy, and how the party trains its activists. The program was intended to give the SPS party-building team, at the very start of its work, an idea of how this task is approached by a well-established party outside of Russia, and allowed regional representatives to discuss problems and opportunities in their own organizations. Soon after this program, SPS initiated a program of internal party training.
- In September, NDI conducted a series of election-related consultations in Moscow with local candidates and campaign managers of SPS and Yabloko. These consultations were intended to help the parties prepare for a coordinated campaign of several party-affiliated candidates for December elections to the Moscow City Council. NDI trainer Nick Demeter conducted the program together with SPS's director of party training, Mikhail Schneider. The training was conducted in tandem with a series of NED-funded seminars held with SPS regional campaign managers and candidates in the Astrakhan and Leningrad regions. The sessions covered voter contact techniques, the budgeting of campaign resources, message development, work with the mass media, and the organization of an election team.

- In December, NDI trainer-consultant Natasha Mirimanova conducted a seminar for observers and coordinators from Yabloko and SPS preparing to take part in legislative elections for the Moscow Oblast. Topics included an overview of the role and purpose of election monitoring, the fundamental elements of election law, and techniques for dealing with violations.
- On December 14 in Moscow, NDI and the International Republican Institute cooperated in facilitating a roundtable discussion of a proposed new election law. At the time of the discussion, the draft law had already passed the first of three readings in the State Duma, and members of Yabloko and SPS requested such a discussion as a forum for discussing possible amendments that could be added before the second reading. The 33 participants included members and staff of the Yabloko, SPS, Communist, Fatherland, and Unity factions. Other participants included representatives of the Central Election Commission, representatives of the presidential administration, and NGO leaders (including Liliya Shibanova, executive director of the VOICE Association).

Following the December discussion, NDI encouraged the discussants, particularly members of the Yabloko and SPS factions, to continue discussing and formulating amendments. NDI also attempted to raise awareness of the issues discussed by distributing information about the roundtable discussion to all Duma members. As of January 2002, NDI was negotiating other possible followup programming with members of the Duma Commission on State-Building.

Evaluation

This evaluation uses long-range goals articulated in NDI's original four-year program proposal and describes incremental progress made toward these goals during 2001. Evaluations in subsequent activity reports will be based upon short-term goals contained in NDI's annual work plans.

Objective: Strengthen regional representation of political parties.

Benchmarks: Democratic parties have established coordinated plans for identifying key segments of the electorate through demographic research and have implemented coordinated voter outreach policies across regional organizations. Parties have established systems of coordinating and developing membership among their regional branches.

In part because NDI operated without a resident director of political party programs during this period, programming in 2001 did not address the use of demographic research in identifying electoral support. With the hiring of its new political party trainer in December 2001, NDI plans to address voter identification and contact issues in coming months in conjunction with an effort to develop long-term internal training systems for party organizers. During this period, however, NDI noted the following achievements by Russian parties in this area:

- For several years in party training programs, NDI has stressed the importance of expanding grassroots membership of democratic parties. The growth of parties in the

regions, particularly Yabloko, has been hampered in the past by complicated membership rules that have slowed recruitment. Because Yabloko is a highly centralized organization, NDI's training on membership development with regional party branches could have no practical effect without the active support of the central leadership. In 2001, the State Duma passed a new law on political parties which required specific minimum levels of membership in a minimum number of regions in order for an organization to qualify for party status. In response to this legal requirement, Yabloko has finally acted to liberalize its membership requirements. Among other changes, the party has eliminated its rule requiring a six-month "candidacy" period for new members.

- NDI worked for years with the Democratic Choice of Russia (DCR) party to assist its coalition-building efforts with like-minded parties. DCR's coalition-building efforts came to fruition with the formation of the Union of Right Forces (SPS) coalition on the eve of parliamentary elections in 1999. On May 26 and 27, SPS held its founding congress as a registered political party. NDI was invited to participate as an observer. At the meeting, DCR and the other separate parties within the coalition dissolved and reformed into a unified organization. The united party resolved to create a party-building function within the organization to coordinate the development of regional party branches, and soon afterwards established an internal party training function to facilitate development of the party's regional organizers.

Objective: Improved party contacts with NGOs.

Benchmarks: Democratic parties develop policies on relations with NGOs, and high-ranking leaders of the parties become responsible for developing and implementing these policies. Parties cooperate with NGOs to rally the support of citizen interest groups, both during and between election periods.

From May to December 2001, NDI's work with both parties and NGOs addressed the need for cooperation between the two groups, but it was primarily in work with civic groups that the issue was translated into specific projects. As NDI's programming evolved during 2001, the Institute chose to emphasize the role of civic groups in the interaction with parties. This was a slight departure from the goal articulated in NDI's original program proposal, which had suggested that both parties and NGOs should develop systematic approaches to dealing with one another. Instead, NDI urged parties to view civic groups as potential allies in promoting a political agenda, but conveyed that the initiative for cooperation should come from civic groups. In this way, parties are encouraged to act as the agents of civic groups and their constituents, and not vice versa.

In line with this reasoning (see discussion in the "Civic Advocacy" section below), NDI encouraged the VOICE Association to take an active role in incorporating regional political party representatives in its activities. Party representatives have taken part in VOICE activities in several regions, both as local government contacts and as participants in roundtable discussions on community issues. Party officials have joined civic activists at roundtable discussions and joint policy meetings in Astrakhan, Chelyabinsk, Ekaterinburg, Krasnodar, and Ryazan to discuss methods of increasing the transparency of the local budgeting process. In St. Petersburg, party-affiliated local officials have met with civic

activists at a “deputies’ club” established by the local VOICE civic coalition, which serves as a forum for discussion of local political issues. This club was established late in 2001; later in 2002, the club’s contribution to dialogue between parties and civic groups should become more apparent.

Objective: Cooperation and coalition-building among like-minded parties.

Benchmark: Democratic parties have systematized their mutual cooperation both in policy advocacy in the legislature and in elections.

Through ongoing discussions with SPS’s party-building team and a series of meetings with Yabloko leader Grigory Yavlinsky, NDI has recently evaluated the progress of efforts to bring these two democratically oriented parties into regular cooperation. Based on these discussions, it is clear that, though cooperation has occurred between the parties on several different levels, and has become systematized in some respects, there are significant differences between the parties that have prevented them from working more closely together.

Yabloko and SPS have made efforts to cooperate in selected regional and local elections in the past two years in order to avoid having their candidates compete directly against each other. NDI has encouraged and supported this type of cooperation, which was founded on the understanding that the two parties’ support often resides in the same electoral base, and that coordinating their election efforts – and uniting behind common candidates where possible – can bring benefit to both parties. In a January 2002 discussion with NDI, Yabloko Party head Grigory Yavlinsky explained that Yabloko and SPS continue to cooperate on an *ad hoc* basis, depending upon the specific situation around a regional election and the desire of individual local party branches to cooperate. The most productive cooperation has been in the Astrakhan region, where the two parties organized a coordinated campaign for the Astrakhan City Council in December 2000 and formed a joint faction in the assembly. In the Moscow Oblast, the two parties coordinated partisan election monitoring activities in local elections in December 2001. NDI has conducted extensive training with SPS’s Leningrad Oblast organization since late 1999, but because of the weakness of Yabloko’s organization in that region, the two parties have not worked together there in any systematic way.

Cooperation between Yabloko and SPS on legislative issues is developing slowly. The SPS and Yabloko factions in the State Duma have worked together through a coordination council since early 2000. Since that time, the two factions have sought NDI’s assistance in facilitating discussion and development of a joint legislative agenda. To that end, NDI hosted an April 2001 parliamentary conference, which brought the faction leaders together with party organizers to discuss specific proposals in several different areas. Between May and December 2001, the parties published the conference presentations and conclusions, and party officials began planning a series of roundtable discussions intended to develop further the policy positions agreed upon at the April conference. As of the end of 2001, however, planning for those discussions had not yet passed the preliminary stage. With the hiring of a new political party trainer in December 2001, NDI plans to work with Yabloko and SPS to arrange issue-based dialogues in 2002 between the parties and their Duma representatives.

At a more general level, NDI's discussions with party leaders have revealed that cooperation is often strained between Yabloko and SPS in part because the parties diverge in their strategies. Whereas Yabloko has long defined itself as a democratic, Western-oriented party of intellectuals in opposition to the government, SPS defines itself more in terms of its market-oriented economic policies, which often coincide with those of the administration. Several SPS members occupy important positions in the executive branch. The parties' differing relations with the government lead to tensions, which continue to prevent close cooperation in many instances.

Objective: Cooperation of parties with elected officials.

Benchmarks: Democratic parties have established systems of regular contact with their affiliated State Duma deputies and have used such systems to develop common policy agendas, maintain regular contact with constituents, and monitor citizen concerns. Democratically oriented factions in the State Duma work more cohesively and effectively to promote their policy agendas in the legislature.

Yabloko and SPS recognize the need to maintain close and cooperative relations between their party organizations and their parliamentary representatives. Because several party leaders also serve in the Duma, communication between party and faction at the federal level is not lacking. However, parties are still not driving forces in the formation of legislative policy in the factions. The Yabloko and SPS factions have worked informally with their parties by giving each member responsibility for a specific region. Lawmakers maintain periodic contact with party leaders in their assigned regions, visit their regions from time to time to meet with voters, and assist with campaign-related activities. NDI has made this type of cooperation a subject of past programming, but it has not yet developed into a systematic support mechanism.

NDI tried to help bridge the gap between parties and lawmakers in 2001 by organizing an issue-based activity – the April conference for the Yabloko and SPS parliamentary factions – that incorporated representatives of both party leadership and parliamentary representatives in an effort to begin formulating a set of joint legislative policy priorities. Because NDI did not have a full-time resident director of party programs in Moscow during the second half of 2001, no followup programming took place in the second half of the year.

NDI organized another issue-based program during this activity period – the December roundtable discussion on proposed election law reforms – which laid a foundation for future progress in cooperation between the party and factions. Though this initial discussion incorporated only members of parliament, future programs on this issue should include regional party representatives, who have been directly involved in organizing elections. Parties have cooperated with the VOICE Association at the local level (see “Civic Advocacy” section, below) in identifying areas of needed reform in election laws. The inclusion of local party organizers in the federal-level debate over election reform could help connect parties more directly to policymaking, and indirectly help boost public confidence in the election process.

Other Results and Accomplishments

Aside from the above objectives, which appeared in NDI's original program proposal in April 2001, it is worthwhile also to note the appearance of SPS's party-building team in the wake of the party's founding congress in May 2001. Though the activities of the party-building team fall outside the framework of NDI's original goals for this program, it is a positive development that can be traced in part to NDI's earlier programming on party-building. This body is headed by Elkhon Kuliev, with whom NDI has worked in the past in Saratov. It is responsible for relations with regional organizations and for party education programs. The latter function is managed by long-time NDI contact Mikhail Shneider.

Following the establishment of SPS's party-building team, NDI responded by organizing a seminar for the new team with Geoffrey Harper of the British Conservative Party (see description above). One outcome of the discussion was an agreement between SPS's Moscow Oblast and Leningrad Oblast organizations to work more closely together. The pairing is auspicious, as the Leningrad Oblast branch is far better developed as an organization than the Moscow Oblast branch, which nevertheless is represented by a large number of local councilors and stands to benefit greatly from a partnership with the Leningrad organization.

A system of internal training is vital to SPS's long-term viability, its ability to organize effectively for local and regional elections, and its capacity to cooperate with NGOs, other parties, and elected officials. NDI intends to use the new party-building team as the basis for future cooperation with SPS.

B. Civic Advocacy

Between May 1 and December 31, 2001, the VOICE Association expanded from five to 15 affiliated local coalitions throughout Russia. VOICE committees are now active in the cities of Astrakhan, Ekaterinburg, Chelyabinsk, Yaroslavl, Vladivostok, Samara, Saratov, Irkutsk, Nizhny Novgorod, Petrozavodsk, Vladimir, Ryazan, Kaliningrad, St. Petersburg, and Krasnodar. Local VOICE activists, with NDI's assistance, have undertaken practical projects with concrete goals designed to promote fair elections and pluralism at the local and regional levels. The projects included monitoring the pre-election environment, educating voters about elections, and pollwatching on election day. VOICE also conducted projects to promote local government transparency and accountability, primarily in the election process and local budgeting. In a broader sense, VOICE has lent moral and technical support to independent, politically active civic groups across Russia. VOICE's primary goal at its founding was to create a national network to monitor elections, but its mission has deepened to include promoting the citizen participation, openness, and transparency that will give those elections real meaning.

For all its achievements, VOICE has operated with considerable obstacles. Not least of these is a persistent fear on the part of Russian civic activists to undertake advocacy activities involving actual contact with government officials. While many local VOICE members have been interested in convening meetings to discuss local problems, few have been willing to organize a serious, coherent, and aggressive advocacy campaign. NDI's training and the cooperation of an expanding network of VOICE affiliates have begun to encourage activists to use a bolder approach.

Besides working with VOICE, NDI offered in-depth consultations to Mothers of Soldiers, Memorial and the Forum of Migrants to help these groups implement specific advocacy projects and other activities. During the year, NDI also began to organize a federal-level program that involved training these national NGOs and others to advocate for desired legislation in the federal parliament.

Activities

The VOICE network expanded from May to December according to the following procedure, developed together with NDI. Over a span of only a few months in the late spring and summer of 2001, members of the VOICE board together with a regional coordinator, and usually an NDI trainer, traveled to several politically important localities distributed strategically across Russia – from Karelia, Kaliningrad, and St. Petersburg in the northwest region; to Ryazan, Novgorod, Vladimir, and Nizhny Novgorod in the center; to Krasnodar in the south; Sochi on the Black Sea; and the Siberian city of Irkutsk – and convened representatives of politically active local NGOs who were interested in joining the association. NDI and VOICE representatives explained the work of VOICE and the issues guiding its programs. These meetings also often involved a presentation on advocacy work. In cases where participants decided to join VOICE, they concluded a coalition agreement among themselves, and then signed a separate affiliation agreement with VOICE. In all target cities, NGOs expressed an interest in joining VOICE, though the official establishment of an affiliate coalition was delayed in some cases, notably in St. Petersburg, where an affiliate was not established until nearly six months after VOICE's initial visit.

Once established, the new VOICE committees began developing advocacy and election-monitoring proposals, which they sent to the VOICE board in Moscow for approval. Newer affiliates received regular training and guidance from NDI's civic advisors, as well as from veteran VOICE activists who had already implemented similar programs in other cities. The goal in training new VOICE committees was to enable them independently to develop and carry out new programs tailored to particular local issues in their communities.

To enhance VOICE's internal training capacity and motivate newer local VOICE affiliates, NDI and the VOICE board determined that one affiliate should be more intensively developed to serve as a model for the rest of the network. The VOICE committee in Yaroslavl was chosen for this role because of its proximity to Moscow and the ease of conducting more regular training there, and also because of the talent and accomplishments of its leadership. It is hoped that, through frequent training programs and close attention from Moscow, VOICE/Yaroslavl will develop local advocacy and monitoring programs to which other local activists can turn for an example. Experienced Yaroslavl activists will then be used as trainers in developing newer affiliates. VOICE and NDI plan to evaluate the effectiveness of this approach in mid-2002.

Specific activities during the period included the following:

- On May 12, NDI trainers organized a seminar for election observers in Samara, shortly before elections in the region. Representatives of 11 organizations attended the sessions, which were hosted by the Center for Political Studies and Activities. The participants' organizations had monitored extensively in elections previously, but NDI training

encouraged participants to expand their activities to publicize election violations and actively discourage fraud.

- In May, NDI organized an initial training session in Yaroslavl designed to guide the local VOICE affiliate through the steps involved in organizing an advocacy campaign.
- In May, NDI trainers and VOICE executive director Tatiana Troinova traveled to Vladimir to meet with local civic organizations interested in establishing a new local VOICE committee. The meeting resulted in the formation of a new affiliate.
- Following NDI training on fundraising and grant-writing techniques, VOICE successfully applied to the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation for a direct grant of \$250,000 over 2½ years. Grant funds will be used to maintain and strengthen VOICE affiliates in 15 regions and support limited election monitoring and advocacy activities.
- On July 20-22, NDI conducted a seminar on election observation at a training center outside of Moscow for all local VOICE affiliates. The training prepared activists to develop and manage election monitoring projects and gave regional coordinators an opportunity to meet and discuss issues of common interest.
- On September 23, following joint training by NDI and VOICE activists, VOICE/Ryazan deployed a monitoring team of approximately 30 volunteers to observe by-elections for regional legislative seats in two districts of the Ryazan region. Because voter turnout fell below the legal minimum of 20 percent, the elections were declared invalid. The local VOICE committee released a report recommending elimination of the minimum turnout rule.
- On September 25, NDI moderated a roundtable discussion in the State Duma between leaders of VOICE and other national civic leaders, parliament members, and Duma staff concerning the problem of legislative transparency and possible means of addressing it. NDI's civic partners had repeatedly cited lack of transparency in lawmaking as a major obstacle in advocacy work, and NDI organized this discussion in part to encourage NGO leaders to take a more active role in encouraging greater openness in the lawmaking process. The 30 participants included representatives of the civic groups Memorial, the Committee of Soldiers' Mothers, the Consortium of Women's NGOs, the Women's Information Network, and others.
- In October, following joint training by NDI and VOICE activists, VOICE/Astrakhan monitored local elections in the Astrakhan Region. Based on its observations, VOICE identified a need for specific improvements in the local election law. The association also successfully persuaded the local election commission to create a monitoring committee of NGO representatives to review and comment on allegations of violations submitted by candidates. VOICE held a press conference and issued a report on its findings, which included a number of procedural violations by polling station workers.

- On December 1 and 2, NDI hosted a planning retreat for the VOICE board of directors at a conference center in the Moscow Region. At the meeting, the board reviewed recent election and advocacy activities and formulated a program strategy for 2002.
- On December 9, VOICE observed regional legislative elections in the Samara region and by-elections to the Vladivostok City Council.
- On December 18 and 19, NDI trainer Natasha Mirimanova led a two-day seminar in St. Petersburg for the civic organization Memorial on means of enhancing the effectiveness of its advocacy work. Participants included 34 representatives of Memorial's local and regional chapters throughout Russia. The seminar dealt with strategies for increasing the visibility of Memorial's activities, and public support for it, through productive media relations. Ms. Mirimanova also discussed the importance of interaction with government authorities as a tool in advocacy.
- In Ekaterinburg, on December 22 and 23, NDI trainer Natasha Mirimanova led a training seminar for 12 activists representing the Forum of Migrants, Memorial, the Chechen-Ingush cultural center of Ekaterinburg, and a local migrants' organization. The groups were cooperating to organize a public awareness and humanitarian assistance mission, which they titled the "Peace Truck" initiative. The project involved driving a truck from Ekaterinburg to refugee camps on the Chechen border to deliver gift packages from humanitarian NGOs to orphaned children of the Chechen conflict. The larger purpose of the project was to draw public and government attention to the suffering of children as a result of the Chechen conflict and thereby encourage public officials to work toward a solution to the crisis. The December seminar focused on strengthening the participants' abilities to work in coalition, and on developing a comprehensive evaluation strategy for their project.
- Throughout this period, NDI worked intensively with members of the VOICE board to develop the association's administrative structure and relations between the Moscow headquarters and local affiliates. In addition to several informal meetings with VOICE's executive director and other board members to discuss management issues, regional affiliate heads joined the discussion during the July training on election monitoring, as well as at the VOICE strategy retreat in December. A major component of this administrative development was training to build VOICE's fundraising capacity. NDI advised VOICE as it prepared funding proposals for several international donors; the effort resulted in grants from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the Eurasia Foundation, the Open Society Institute, and the Ford Foundation.

Evaluation

Objective: Help the VOICE coalition develop a permanent, self-sustaining, national organization with a defined structure and operating procedures.

Benchmark: VOICE appoints a permanent full-time executive director and restructures its board of directors to adequately represent the coalition's geographic and institutional diversity.

Until late 2001, the acting executive director of VOICE had been Tatiana Troinova, the Moscow-based director of the Women’s Information Network, one of VOICE’s charter members. Ms. Troinova had assumed the position on a temporary basis, and NDI had urged VOICE for several months to hire a full-time executive. In October 2001, the board designated Liliya Shibanova, the leader of VOICE’s Astrakhan affiliate, as the association’s new executive director. The selection of a regional leader underscores VOICE’s commitment to a regionally-based strategy driven by grassroots programs. VOICE’s administrative staff in Moscow now consists of an executive director, a media relations manager, a regional coordinator, an administrative assistant, and an accountant. It is expected that the staff will remain a constant size for at least the year 2002.

A major institutional goal of NDI’s work with VOICE has been to encourage its board of directors to expand and become more representative of the national membership. VOICE’s four-member board now includes representatives of the Institute for Election Systems Development, the Young Lawyers Association (which claims 50 regional affiliates), the Center for Russian Environmental Policy (a coalition of around 50 environmental organizations), and the Center for Ecology and Politics (a Moscow-based think tank). By general consensus, the board has assumed a minimalist role that includes fundraising, coordinating information flow among the local affiliates, and providing technical and training assistance to the affiliates. While it is not expected that the board will grow substantially in the near future, NDI has encouraged VOICE to expand the body to include more members overall, more representatives of regional affiliates, and some representation from outside VOICE. The four-member board was adequate in VOICE’s early stages, but is cannot properly represent a national organization with dozens of members spread across fifteen or more cities. NDI and VOICE have already begun meeting with leaders of successful regional civic groups who might contribute new board members.

Benchmark: VOICE establishes new affiliate coalitions in diverse regions that develop and implement election monitoring and issue advocacy programs.

One of the chief strategic challenges driving VOICE’s planning in 2001 was the need to expand rapidly to several regions in order to monitor elections and mobilize civic activists on a nationwide scale. NDI devoted much attention during this activity period to helping VOICE develop a system for expansion that would allow for establishment of new affiliates in strategically important regions, while also reinforcing the organizing skills of existing affiliates and not allowing their programs to suffer from lack of guidance. The system that NDI and VOICE developed is described above (see “Activities”).

VOICE Partnerships, with Founding Dates	
<i>As of January 2002</i>	
Astrakhan	Summer 2000
Chelyabinsk	Summer 2000
Ekaterinburg	Summer 2000
Irkutsk	Summer 2001
Kaliningrad	Summer 2001
Krasnodar Region	Summer 2001
Nizhny Novgorod	Summer 2001
Petrozavodsk, Karelia	Summer 2001
Ryazan	Summer 2001
Samara	Summer 2001
Saratov	Summer 2001
St. Petersburg	Fall 2001
Vladimir	Summer 2001
Vladivostok, Primorsky Krai	Fall 2000
Yaroslavl	Summer 2000

The accompanying table lists all existing VOICE partnerships with their founding dates. Election monitoring programs have already been developed and implemented in Astrakhan (in December 2000 and December 2001), Chelyabinsk (in December 2000 and spring 2001), Ekaterinburg (July and December 2000 and spring 2001), Vladivostok and the surrounding region (January and December 2001), Ryazan (September 2001), Samara (July and December 2001), and Yaroslavl (in December 2000 and fall 2001). The affiliates in Astrakhan, Chelyabinsk, Ekaterinburg, Petrozavodsk, Krasnodar, and Yaroslavl have developed advocacy projects to promote transparency in local budgeting. The affiliates in Astrakhan, Krasnodar, and Ryazan have worked to inform the public about the activities of local officials by compiling directories of lawmakers and monitoring their fulfillment of campaign promises. Newer affiliates that have not yet implemented programs are beginning to plan election observation projects for 2002.

Benchmark: VOICE develops a diverse funding base consisting of both Russian and international donors, including local funding for local advocacy efforts.

NDI's work with VOICE has devoted significant attention to developing the association's fundraising capacity. This training and the efforts of VOICE's board and local activists resulted in a number of outside grants. The association's local affiliate in Yaroslavl was particularly successful in this regard:

- The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, which had contributed a grant of \$100,000 to NDI in support of VOICE's programs in 2000 and 2001, concluded a direct grant agreement with VOICE totaling \$250,000 over 2½ years, starting in November 2001.
- The Open Society Institute gave a small grant to the VOICE affiliate in Yaroslavl to support an initiative to promote transparency in local government procurement.
- The Eurasia Foundation agreed to fund VOICE's advocacy campaigns for budget transparency in smaller cities in the Yaroslavl region.
- The Ford Foundation is supporting VOICE's publication of the Yaroslavl municipal budget on the Internet.

Objective: Strengthen the VOICE coalition's skills in organizing election monitoring, voter education and issue advocacy programs.

Benchmark: VOICE conducts a nationwide monitoring effort around the 2003 parliamentary and local elections.

Monitoring of the 2003 parliamentary elections is a long-term goal for VOICE, and no specific preparation is underway at this time. However, VOICE's current programs are helping to indicate how a major nationwide monitoring program would be conducted.

Because VOICE will not have expanded to all 89 Russian regions by the time of the 2003 elections, monitoring the campaign and voting will require that VOICE form a temporary coalition with other national civic groups to broaden its regional coverage.

It is also clear, based on VOICE's monitoring experience to date, that election monitoring will need to focus on the pre-election period, when the bulk of violations have been shown to occur. This will require longer-term monitoring of the mass-media environment, formation of election commissions, the legal framework for the elections, and candidate adherence to campaign regulations, possibly for several months prior to election day.

Finally, a comprehensive monitoring project around a parliamentary vote will most likely require funding beyond the amount available from existing sources. To address this issue, NDI is already assisting VOICE in cultivating new potential donors, primarily in the international donor community, who are concerned with promoting transparency in the Russian electoral system.

Benchmark: Local VOICE coalition affiliates conduct issue advocacy programs in cooperation with local government and/or political party organizations, which result in positive measures to address community concerns.

Outside of pure election observation, several local VOICE affiliates have developed programs that draw on their election monitoring experience to address community concerns. As VOICE is primarily devoted to promoting the rights of voters, most of the association's early projects have addressed issues connected with elections. **VOICE/Astrakhan**, for example, carried out pre-election and election-day monitoring around local elections in October 2001. Based on their observations, the coalition members identified inconsistencies between the Russian constitution and regional election law and publicly recommended specific reforms to the law. The committee also initiated discussions with local deputies about increasing budget transparency and getting legislation introduced to provide for public hearings. During its monitoring activity, VOICE persuaded the local election commission to create a civic monitoring board to review allegations of wrongdoing made by the candidates and report their conclusions to the election commission.

Several local VOICE affiliates have also conducted their advocacy activities on other issues not directly related to elections. Chief among these are promoting greater transparency in municipal budgets and promoting improvements in local and regional election laws. NDI has provided basic training to the VOICE committees on developing and managing the projects, and has continued advising periodically during the projects, but in general, VOICE has taken the lead on these advocacy activities. The following are some representative projects:

- With the help of city councilor Oleg Vinogradov, **VOICE/Yaroslavl** successfully advocated for passage of a local law requiring publication of the city budget. VOICE/Yaroslavl is now working to promote legislation mandating public hearings and requiring competitive bidding in local government procurement.
- **VOICE/Astrakhan** has initiated discussions with local legislators aimed at increasing budget transparency and introducing legislation to provide for public hearings on local legislative issues. This committee has also begun publishing a directory of local elected officials and monitoring their legislative activities as a way of increasing citizen awareness of government and enforcing the accountability of local officials.

- In addition to publishing a directory of local lawmakers, as in Astrakhan, **VOICE/Ryazan** has begun publishing a weekly newsletter detailing the activity of the Ryazan regional legislature.

Benchmark: VOICE contributes to public knowledge of the rights and responsibilities of voters in the cities and regions where the coalition works.

VOICE's efforts to compile public directories of lawmakers and monitor their fulfillment of campaign promises in Astrakhan, Ryazan, and the Krasnodar region constitute a serious effort to inform voters of their right to information about the activities of their elected officials. In a similar effort, as part of VOICE/Yaroslavl's efforts to promote local government accountability, it organized a public "town hall" meeting for a regional lawmaker to allow him to report to voters on steps he has taken to fulfill campaign promises. These projects are an outgrowth of VOICE's election-related projects in 2000 in Ekaterinburg, Chelyabinsk, Astrakhan, and Yaroslavl, in which affiliates organized public debates for candidates, established voter information hotlines to give voters a means of gaining information about their rights and responsibilities in the election process, and distributed printed pamphlets containing information on candidates and their positions on issues.

Objective: Help civic organizations other than VOICE cooperate with local government and political institutions to address local community priorities.

Benchmark: Civic organizers demonstrate improved ability to formulate strategic plans and organize advocacy projects around their issues in direct engagement with local government and political party organizations.

The most important of NDI's few seminars with civic organizations outside of VOICE during this period was the late December program around the Ekaterinburg "Peace Truck" initiative. This project, a component of the larger-scale efforts of Memorial and the Forum of Migrants to draw public and government attention to the suffering of orphans of the Chechen conflict, was inspired in part by the several years of training and support that NDI has provided to Memorial, the Committee of Soldiers' Mothers, the Migrants' Forum, and others. This ambitious humanitarian mission, which also served to enlist government support and mobilize public opinion on the humanitarian crisis in Chechnya, is a reflection of the progress that civic groups have made over recent years. Through the program, the groups demonstrated skill in identifying a political and social issue around which to unite, forming an issue-based coalition, and designing a creative project to address the issue. The groups enlisted the support of the Ekaterinburg local government, and even secured the cooperation of Interior Ministry officials, who supplied an armed escort for the truck as it traveled from Ekaterinburg to the Chechen border. As late as 1997 and 1998, NDI was working with Memorial, the Committee of Soldiers' Mothers, and other NGOs on the basic issues of identifying and selecting issues for advocacy projects; in 2001, these groups were able to design and implement a project on their own, with the active involvement of local government. They requested NDI's assistance only with refining their coalition-building skills and designing an evaluation strategy.

In September, NDI organized a roundtable discussion in Moscow between NGO leaders and members of the State Duma to encourage more active communication between the two groups. The purpose of the discussion was to formulate concrete recommendations on means of improving the interaction of civic activists and lawmakers. Among State Duma representatives who attended the round table were Yekaterina Lakhova, Deputy Chairperson of the Committee on Affairs of Civic groups and religious organizations, Sergei Popov, Deputy Chairman of the State-Building Committee, and Vasily Andreev, the head of the PR department of the State Duma. Several of the NGO participants had already formed close working relationships with members, which testifies to the progress these NGOs have already made in developing cooperation with the legislature. The discussion participants collectively endorsed a set of recommendations to improve the openness of the legislative process and make it more accessible to NGO participation. Recommendations included prompt public announcement of members' voting records following each vote, broader public dissemination of the text of pending legislation, greater public involvement in the deliberations of legislative committees and consultative councils, and easier physical access to the Duma facilities. The program laid the groundwork for civic groups to advocate more forcefully on their own for access to information from the State Duma, but more time and additional activities in this area will be necessary to demonstrate the long-term benefit of this type of program.

Benchmark: Civic organizers cooperate with political party activists to help formulate policy objectives.

As described above in the “Political Party Programs” section of this report, NDI’s programming works with both civic groups and political parties to encourage the two groups to cooperate in promoting common policy objectives. In particular, NDI encourages civic groups, rather than political parties, to take the lead in pursuing cooperation, in the hope that government in this way will respond to citizens’ concerns, and not vice-versa. In line with this approach, VOICE regional committees, with NDI’s encouragement and support, incorporated political party representatives in several activities connected with their advocacy programs during this activity period. Specifically:

- VOICE partnerships have developed advocacy projects to promote local budget transparency in **Astrakhan, Chelyabinsk, Ekaterinburg, Krasnodar, Karelia, and Yaroslavl**. These projects have involved roundtable discussions with key local leaders – including political party organizers – concerning the importance of budget transparency and local government accountability. These discussions have helped to enlist the support of parties, and elected officials affiliated with those parties, in pressing for greater openness in the budgeting process.
- **VOICE/St. Petersburg** formed a “deputies’ club” which serves as a forum for civic groups and local elected officials to discuss issues of interest to local citizens.
- **VOICE/Ryazan**, after monitoring local elections in September 2001, identified deficiencies in regional election law and brought them to the attention of political parties in the region in an effort to promote improvements in the law.

C. Outreach

From May to December 2001, NDI's outreach program consisted primarily of producing and distributing the quarterly newsletter *The Democratic Observer*, which for several years has provided civic, government and political leaders across the country with information about NDI training programs and interviews with political and civic figures. Recipients included more than 6,200 political and civic activists across Russia, most of them former participants in NDI training programs. The newsletter has been a relatively inexpensive means of maintaining regular contact with past participants in NDI's programs distributing research materials on democracy development and information about the activities of democratic activists across Russia.

"When I came to the last session of our regional legislature, I saw NDI's newsletter on every deputy's desk. In that issue was my interview about how hard it is for deputies to get information about the regional budget from the administration. My colleagues started asking me how I had managed to get in this newsletter. My answer was: "Beware, the international eye is watching over all of us." This article is a welcome help in my effort to make the administration more accountable to the deputies and to our voters."

Oleg Vinogradov
Yaroslavl Regional Assembly

In addition to the quarterly newsletter, NDI has continued to distribute to its Russian contacts training materials, scholarly articles and other information about democratic development.

IV. OUTSIDE FUNDING

NDI commonly requests in-kind support, and occasionally supplementary funding, from partners and outside funders to defray the cost of programs. For programs with SPS between May and December 2001, the party provided training facilities. For the July roundtable discussion with SPS's new party-building team, NDI invited Geoffrey Harper, a veteran party trainer for the British Conservative Party, to lead the discussion and provide training to SPS leaders. Mr. Harper's time was donated by the Conservative Party.

V. PERSONNEL

Civic trainer Alina Inayeh managed NDI's Moscow office during this period and coordinated programs with civic groups with the assistance of local program coordinator Ali Aliev. In the absence of a lead political party trainer, Moscow-based program officer Ray Sontag organized party training programs to be led by outside trainers. He was assisted by local program coordinator Irina Kalashnikova, who was hired during the year. Russian program coordinator Vitaly Charushin managed party programs in the State Duma. The supporting staff of local administrators included an office manager, accountant, receptionist, an interpreter, and a driver who also functioned as a technical support specialist. In October, Ray Sontag transferred to NDI's Washington office, where he continued as a Russia program officer there. In Washington, Ambassador Nelson Ledsky and Program Officer Baron Lobstein oversaw Russia programs.

In November, NDI hired Daniel Kunin to assume direction of NDI's political party programs in Moscow. He arrived in Moscow in January 2002.