The Road to Democracy: Assessing NDI’s Programs in Jordan

Report by American University School of International Service Graduate Students

Spring 2014
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Report by American University School of International Service Spring 2014 Practicum
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The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to Ambassador Sally Shelton-Colby,
the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) in Washington, D.C. and Amman,
Jordan, and all interviewees for their support.
Executive Summary

Jordan’s King Abdullah II has publicly articulated a progressive vision for a democratic future based on political openness and economic development. However, the reform process has been largely stagnant and several obstacles to democratization remain. Jordan’s parliament has limited power, weak capacity, insufficient resources, and a lack of checks and balances. Further, with all 75 members of the Senate appointed by the monarchy, the parliament is not fully representative of Jordan’s population, specifically people in urban areas and women. King Abdullah II maintains fragile stability in a country where refugee populations from Palestine, Iraq, and Syria outnumber the population of native Jordanians, also referred to as “East Bankers.” Finally, the King’s reform agenda faces stiff resistance from tribes and the security sector, which are two major power centers in Jordanian politics.

Under the aegis of the United States government, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI)—a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization created in 1983—works to support Jordan’s commitment to peace and stability. NDI provides democracy support by assisting civic and political leaders, monitoring elections, and promoting citizen participation, all while advancing democratic values, practices, and institutions.

In this context, a team of 12 American University graduate students from the School of International Service was tasked with providing a qualitative assessment of NDI Jordan’s (NDI-J) democracy support programs and recommendations for how it can enhance its existing work. This program study closely mirrors NDI-J’s programmatic structure in that it is divided into four sections: Legislative Strengthening, Women’s Political Participation, Youth Engagement, and Election Monitoring and Observation. Because efforts to strengthen civil society overlap with nearly all aspects of NDI’s work in Jordan, assessment of its activities is combined in the previous four sections. At the conclusion of the qualitative assessment, the team identified key areas within each section where NDI-J can expand its existing programming, as well as new areas to explore in future program design. Overall, given the political and economic constraints, this study reveals that NDI-J has been effective in fulfilling its stated goals.

NDI-J provides legislative support to Jordanian parliamentarians (MPs) through trainings and technical assistance, with a particular focus on female MPs. This assistance has improved the legislative capacity of MPs to be effective legislators who are engaged with and responsive to their constituents. However, NDI-J can strengthen its legislative program by bolstering existing political parties, helping to establish new parties, and expanding and enhancing the parliamentary fellows program. Programs can be further enhanced by initiating contact with segments of the population not currently engaged in NDI-J programming.
NDI-J’s women’s programming has made significant strides in helping participants overcome financial and social barriers to political participation and in preparing women to assume leadership positions. However, women’s participation in politics and civil society is greatly constrained by economic inequality and a lack of understanding of gender-specific economic challenges. NDI-J should educate women on these challenges and how to advocate for reform. Finally, to increase the impact of its women’s programming, NDI-J should increase outreach to men and encourage dialogue on gender equality and the overall benefits of enhancing female participation in Jordan.

To date, the most successful NDI-J initiative has been its Usharek youth engagement programs. Participants praise these programs for their high-quality support and overall utility for young Jordanians. To enhance sustainability, NDI-J should provide greater capacity-building and technical support to administrators and participants in an effort to encourage local ownership. Furthermore, NDI-J should cultivate a stronger relationship with the Ministry of Education (MoE) to develop civic education curricula for primary and secondary schools.

A key strength of NDI-J’s election monitoring and observation program is its ability to connect with domestic organizations and provide technical assistance to increase legitimacy of the organizations and the election itself. While this program was

### Sector-Specific Recommendations

#### Legislative Strengthening
- Bolster existing political parties and help establish new parties
- Expand and enhance parliamentary fellows program
- Initiate contact with populations not currently engaged in NDI programs

#### Women’s Political Participation
- Educate women on gender-specific economic challenges and how to advocate for reform
- Increase outreach to men and encourage dialogue on gender equality

#### Youth Engagement
- Provide greater capacity-building and technical support to school administrators and participants
- Cultivate a stronger relationship with the MoE to develop civic education curricula for primary and secondary schools

#### Election Monitoring & Observation
- Maintain relationship with IEC and provide further capacity-building support
- Closely monitor partner organizations to ensure credibility and effectiveness
successful in training domestic monitors, NDI-J’s election monitoring and observation program could be enhanced by maintaining its existing relationship with the Independent Election Commission (IEC) and providing further capacity-building support. Moreover, NDI-J should closely monitor its partner organizations to ensure credibility, reliability, and effectiveness.

In conclusion, NDI’s programs in Jordan have made important contributions to the country’s ongoing reform process. NDI-J’s strengths lie primarily in having a culturally-aware and context-sensitive staff, lack of a political agenda, focus on sustainable development, and in acting as partner rather than donor. Thus far, recommendations have been sector specific. General recommendations to further encourage democratic reform in Jordan are as follows: 1. Expand NDI-J’s work to include interfaith programming; Working with various religious groups from a grassroots level is pivotal in promoting democratic values and traditions. 2. Provide additional financial and technical support to civil society partners to develop effective advocacy strategies that ensure policy papers have broader outreach and impact; Building the capacity of civil society partners to strengthen advocacy and outreach is critical to gaining public and political support for important issues. 3. Expand Usharek programming beyond universities to engage youth from other sectors of society; Spurring local momentum from a “town hall” format, the successful Usharek programs can engage the large portion of youth not in universities. 4. Increase outreach to groups that are not currently participating in NDI-J programs; Targeting traditional sources of power in Jordanian society can help democracy support efforts gain traction. 5. Establish a platform for virtual collaboration for NDI-J’s youth, women, and legislative programs; Building strong social networks and sharing expertise with others in similarly evolving political contexts can provide an inclusive framework for reform.

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Assessment

Introduction

In 2004, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) launched democracy support efforts in Jordan. Though the space for significant reform is limited within Jordan’s monarchical system, NDI Jordan’s (NDI-J) programs have contributed to the development of a more active and informed Parliament and citizenry. Cognizant of the need for gradual change in Jordan, NDI-J has implemented democracy support, rather than democracy promotion, programming in various sectors. Stanford University Professor Larry Diamond—a leading expert in the field of democracy and governance—describes democracy promotion as an aggressive inducement to rapid liberalization under a Western model whereas democracy support is more gradual and builds the capacity of local actors to develop their own governance model.¹ In a holistic approach, the organization’s programs in Jordan focus on empowering legislators, women, youth, and civil society organizations (CSOs), as well as supporting election monitoring organizations. Accordingly, this report closely mirrors NDI-J’s programmatic structure. Because efforts to strengthen civil society overlap with nearly all aspects of NDI’s work in Jordan, assessment of its support to CSOs is integrated into the respective sections.

Methodology

This program assessment is wholly qualitative due to the limited availability of internal metrics as well as monitoring and evaluation data. Further, due to time constraints, the team was unable to acquire quantifiable data from partners and program participants, including results from anonymous surveys and evaluations for each of NDI-J’s program areas.

To gain a better understanding of Jordan’s political, social, and economic climate, the team conducted an initial literature review of relevant academic, professional, and government sources, as well as NDI-J’s published program materials, and consulted U.S.-based academics and practitioners who have expertise on Jordan (Reference Appendix A). The team traveled to Amman, Jordan from March 9, 2014 to March 16, 2014 to conduct targeted interviews with NDI-J and many of their partner organizations (Reference Appendix B). Informational interviews were also held with civil society organizations and activists not currently affiliated with NDI-J. During each interview, the team asked a
standardized set of questions (Reference Appendix C), though most questions were focused on the respective issue area, individual, or organization. While many of the interviews with NDI-J partners were held in English, NDI-J staffers served as translators for the few conducted in Arabic. The team recognizes that interviews held in the presence of NDI-J staff may have tempered interviewees’ desire to critique their NDI-J partners.

Using feedback and suggestions from partners, program participants, as well as unaffiliated expert opinions, the team conducted a qualitative assessment of NDI-J’s programs and identified areas for expansion and new initiatives in the following areas.

**Legislative Strengthening**

NDI-J provides impactful legislative support to Jordanian members of parliament (MPs) through trainings and technical assistance, with a particular focus on female MPs. In March 2014, NDI-J coordinated with the U.S. Department of State to send a diverse group of six MPs to Washington, D.C., where they met with members of Congress to discuss the role legislative bodies play in representative governance. NDI-J also supports Jordan’s legislature indirectly by partnering with and helping to fund Jordanian think tanks and CSOs. NDI-J’s partnerships with CSOs have proved fruitful in developing numerous policy reports—one of which influenced a legislative debate about Jordan’s controversial labor law—and supporting parliamentary monitoring and evaluation programs by CSOs. Furthermore, NDI-J’s support to parliamentary blocs promotes issue-based cooperation among parliamentarians on matters such as media freedom, female empowerment, and economic development. NDI-J was also successful in
helping to reform legislative bylaws, which led to the recognition of parliamentary blocs and prohibited MPs from switching blocs during election season.³

While NDI-J has made important contributions to legislative strengthening in Jordan, the following recommendations highlight areas for further growth.

**Legislative Strengthening—Recommendations**

1. *Increase support for existing political parties and help to establish new ones.*

   Although NDI-J has a relationship with the HASHD and al Wasat political parties, the extent of their support to political parties is notably limited. NDI-J staff members stated that this is in part to avoid a redoubling of efforts with the International Republican Institute (IRI); however, the team found that IRI’s work with political parties is largely at the municipal level, leaving a gap in support at the national level.

   NDI-J’s work with blocs in the Jordanian parliament has strengthened members’ capacity to formulate policy on important issues including media freedom, gender equality, and economic development. Nonetheless, parliamentarians remain heavily dependent on policy instruction from the executive government and security sector to legislate on these issues. MPs admitted that blocs have not been successful in establishing long-term cooperation among members. MP Jamil al Nimri, for example, described the legislature as having 150 individuals with 150 different agendas.⁴ Moreover, bloc membership fails to connect MPs to their constituents in a way that political parties have the potential to do.

   Cognizant of the fact that political parties were outlawed for several years and remain controversial in Jordan, the team recognizes NDI-J’s limitations in pursuing political party work. However, because the legislature has gained increasing legitimacy over the past decade, there is an opportunity for gradual, sustained engagement with political parties. NDI-J should work to increase the capacity of existing political parties, which would allow them to drive the policy debate in Jordan and inspire others to establish political parties more representative of Jordan’s population. Specifically, NDI-J should train members of political parties on effective outreach strategies, and assist with the development and promotion of an engaging national agenda. In
doing so, NDI-J should take care not to appear exclusionary or Western-centric in their support of political parties by providing inclusive, broad-based assistance to those that embody universal, democratic ideals.

Along with capacity building, NDI-J should also provide advocacy trainings to political parties in order for them to galvanize grassroots support. NDI-J should work with CSOs to produce and disseminate policy papers emphasizing the importance of political parties and host local events that provide a platform for parties to speak to prospective members and voters. Jordanian citizens and politicians must be equally invested in the success of political parties in order for them to become strong policy drivers and vehicles of change.

2. **Compensate parliamentary fellows and expand the initiative to include a page program for 16-18 year olds.**

Jordanian MPs frequently cite insufficient support staff as undermining their ability to introduce legislation, attend sessions, and interact with constituents. NDI-J’s parliamentary fellowship program addresses this problem by pairing MPs with university graduates who provide part-time administrative and research support. In addition to providing assistance to MPs, the fellowship offers a unique opportunity for young adults to participate in the legislative process and develop professional skills. Being unpaid, however, the fellowship program caters to those who can afford to participate, limiting its potential to reach broader segments of society. NDI-J should therefore increase donor outreach in order to secure government or private funding for fellowship stipends, which would place the opportunity within reach of all economic classes.

NDI-J’s current parliamentary fellows program also provides a new opportunity to support King Abdullah II’s civic education reform. Creating a legislative page program for secondary school students would allow fellows more time to provide research support to their MPs while offering legislative work experience to students who show interest in public policy. Legislative pages would work part-time during the parliamentary session with the potential to receive a limited stipend covering the cost of food and transportation in order to incentivize participation. As pages, students would
handle administrative tasks currently performed by the parliamentary fellows and take part in the legislative process under the mentorship of the fellow and respective MP. NDI-J should consider reaching out to the Ministry of Education or relevant Jordanian CSOs as potential program funders.

**Strengthening Women’s Political Participation**

NDI-J’s Women’s Political Participation team has made great strides in helping women overcome barriers to political participation and preparing women to assume leadership positions. More than 170 prospective female parliamentarians attended NDI-J workshops on political campaign management prior to the January 2013 elections, including 12 of the 18 women elected into parliament. Following their success, 13 of these MPs formed Jordan’s first-ever Women’s Caucus—supported by NDI-J—to mainstream gender equality, advocate female empowerment, and improve social services for women. Moreover, 17 female MPs currently work with NDI-J to bolster their political agendas and spark national reform. MPs identify important issue areas and NDI-J in turn provides tailored support, often by hiring experienced consultants to brief and advise them on respective issues. In response to staffing constraints in Jordan’s parliament, NDI-J also trained 27 research fellows to assist female parliamentarians with constituent outreach, and to conduct research to draft and pass appropriate legislation. Her Excellency Tamam Al-Riyati, a current MP and coordinator of the Women’s Caucus, attributes much of her legislative success to NDI-J’s continued support—a testament to NDI’s strength in this area.
While the Women’s Political Participation program has achieved monumental gains in three short years, the team identified the following areas in which NDI-J could enhance its women’s programming and further empower Jordanian women in the political, social, and economic spheres.

**Strengthening Women’s Political Participation—Recommendations**

1. *Place greater emphasis on helping women to advocate for reforms in order to reduce economic barriers to political and civic participation.*

While the Middle East and North Africa region suffers from low female participation in the labor force (FPLF), Jordan’s rate of FPLF is among the lowest in the world at 15 percent. Despite the fact that women make up the majority of university graduates in Jordan, unemployment is twice as high among young women as young men. H.E. Asma Khader, parliamentarian and secretary general of the Jordanian National Commission for Women (JNCW), claimed that the primary challenges for Jordanian women entering the workforce are inadequate family benefits, high costs of transportation, and unaffordable childcare. Faced with these burdens, women are so concerned with their family’s livelihood that they do not feel they have the ability to participate in political and civic life. Educating women on gender-specific economic challenges and how to effectively advocate long-term reform will enhance NDI-J’s ability to increase female participation.

Specifically, NDI-J should offer greater advocacy support to partner organizations that produce policy papers on women’s economic issues, like the Economic and Social Council (ESC). For example, NDI-J can assist the ESC in leading focus groups on these issues to raise awareness, facilitate constructive dialogue among participants, and come up with action plans and campaigns to advocate change. NDI-J should also encourage MPs to attend these focus groups in order to engage with constituents and better understand their economic needs. ESC parliamentary briefings, particularly for the Women’s Caucus, should be organized as a follow-up to the policy papers in order to enhance MPs’ understanding of underlying issues that preclude women’s economic participation and to inform legislative decisions.
2. **Increase outreach to men to raise awareness about gender equity and the overall benefits of enhancing female participation.**

The rationale for male inclusion in gender-related programming and policy work has been documented extensively in academic literature and international conferences. Because it is primarily men who perpetuate gender inequality, they also have the potential to be important agents of change. Exploring how male identity and societal norms in Jordan contribute to discrimination and violence against women, and how they can be altered to support gender parity, is key to ensuring broad based, long-lasting reform. While NDI-J supports efforts by its partners to reach out to and educate men on female empowerment, it does not spearhead its own male-targeted efforts, which is an area of great potential. Men must be made aware of the political and economic implications of gender-based discrimination, and be provided an opportunity to support programs that promote women’s empowerment.

NDI-J should coordinate with well-established CSOs to host a national conference on gender-based discrimination in the political, economic, and social sectors. The JNCW, the General Federation of Jordanian Women, and Al-Quds Center for Political Studies are examples of organizations that could act as co-sponsors, as they have male members and leaders, and a demonstrated interest in gender equality. Following the conference, NDI-J can partner with journalists, media outlets, and CSOs to publish and disseminate key findings and recommendations, and organize a working group to create an action plan to implement recommendations.

Additionally, NDI-J should consult with the Jordanian Commission for Democratic Culture (JCDC) and/or the Women Society for Cultural Development (Nama’a), both of which hold women’s rights seminars for male and female college students, to develop workshops on gender equity geared towards male participants. In addition to workshops, NDI-J should encourage dialogue through community-based focus groups, facilitated by men and women, to exchange ideas and explore the benefits of reshaping gender norms in Jordan. Partner CSOs can provide support to NDI-J by demonstrating local ownership of these initiatives through
hosting workshops and focus groups in various governorates. NDI-J should also train local CSOs on how to conduct targeted male outreach in a way that is most appealing and appropriate, while being sensitive to cultural and religious dynamics. Men who participate in these workshops can then be encouraged to recruit others, identify new outreach strategies, explore relevant discussion topics, and lead workshops or campaigns of their own.

Finally, MP Al-Riyati recommended that NDI-J develop sensitivity trainings and gender-equity workshops for male MPs in order to mitigate discrimination against female parliamentarians and their constituents. Members of the Women’s Caucus should spearhead these projects and partner with interested male counterparts to encourage attendance.

**Youth Engagement**

A common refrain heard during domestic and in-country interviews is that youth are a key vehicle of change in Jordanian society. Because youth between the ages of 10 and 24 make up over 30 percent of Jordan’s population, investing in youth is critically important to NDI-J’s work.

NDI-J’s youth programming is effectively achieving its stated goal of empowering youth by providing them the skills and tools necessary to launch successful advocacy campaigns. To date, NDI-J has worked with an impressive 4,500 students in universities across Jordan through its Usharek programs, and is appropriately expanding to include secondary school students with its First-Time Voters Project. During visits with participating students, many noted the importance of the Usharek programs in helping them become well versed in universal,
democratic principles, and providing them trainings on how to effectively transform ideas into civic activism.

While NDI Amman’s youth programming has made significant gains in the area of youth empowerment in Jordan, there are areas in which NDI-J can expand its work to further strengthen its youth initiatives and broaden its reach.

Youth Engagement—Recommendations

1. Improve the sustainability of NDI-J youth programs through increased capacity-building and local ownership.

Capacity-building for those in leadership and management positions is crucial to promoting program sustainability. Osama K. Nusier, vice president of Al Al-Bayt University in Mafraq governorate, highlighted the need to train school administrators on how to effectively operate and manage student activity programs. Vice President Nusier expressed appreciation for NDI-J’s Usharek programs but underscored the lack of training provided to senior-level university officials on how to run such programs themselves. Mr. Nusier noted the importance of local ownership in creating lasting programs, which help to engage disaffected students. Training school administrators, such as student activity deans, on how to maintain and expand student engagement programs is critical for the long-term sustainability of NDI-J’s youth initiatives. Trainings should include relevant topics such as program management and organization, fundraising and donor support, program development, and communications and outreach.

Additionally, though NDI-J provides technical assistance to Usharek+ and Usharek+ Alumni Club participants, greater emphasis should be placed on educating students about
fundraising strategies and donor outreach in order to enhance the effectiveness and durability of its programs. This recommendation stemmed from a meeting with Usharek+ and Usharek+ Alumni Club students at Al Al-Bayt University, who organize numerous campaigns on campus.\textsuperscript{15} Students claimed their biggest obstacles to running successful campaigns are insufficient budgets and inexperience with fundraising, which highlights the need for NDI-J to provide trainings and technical support in these areas. Educating students on best practices for effective fundraising and donor outreach will allow them to enhance the impact and sustainability of their campaigns, which can transform into long-term initiatives.

2. \textit{Work with the Ministry of Education to develop civic education curricula for primary school students.}

In a series of discussion papers detailing Jordan’s path towards reform, King Abdullah II characterizes citizens as the foundation of any democratic system and encourages Jordanians to embrace the three pillars of active citizenship: “the right to participate; the duty to participate; and the responsibility to participate peacefully and respectfully.”\textsuperscript{16} Jordan has invested heavily in educational reform, with impressive gains in access to and quality of educational instruction, yet Jordan’s curricula relies heavily on rote memorization at the expense of critical thinking. These skills are necessary to enable Jordan’s youngest citizens to “consider alternative ideas, think of unconventional solutions to unconventional problems, and articulate these solutions.”\textsuperscript{17} While reforms may be incremental, NDI-J should petition the Ministry of Education (MoE) to expand the former’s existing youth programming to reach an even younger cohort. Recognizing that education reform is a sensitive and often controversial area of development, NDI-J would simply be responding to a call from King Abdullah II for youth to become more informed and engaged in Jordan’s reform process.

In 2003, the MoE partnered with the Jordanian Center for Civic Education (JCCCES) to implement Project Citizen as a pilot initiative to teach young people to be active citizens. Project Citizen attempts to cultivate an environment conducive to democracy. In order for democracy to take root in Jordan, a culture must be developed to “accept diversity, respect different points of view and tolerate—even encourage—dissent.”\textsuperscript{18} Educational reforms may not produce an immediate change but will prove to have a lasting impact on Jordanians’ view of citizenship.
In collaboration with JCCES—which has experience in designing civic education programs that are student-led and interactive—and the MoE, NDI-J should develop and implement age-appropriate programming for students as young as ten years old. One way to engage a younger population is through service-learning—a method of teaching in which the academic curriculum is linked to student involvement in the community. Students first identify an issue in their community, conduct research on this issue, and then use problem-solving skills to create innovative solutions. The project thus allows students to apply classroom knowledge to real-world situations as active members of their communities. A recent study analyzing key drivers and outcomes of youth civic participation in the Middle East and North Africa noted youth community engagement as a “seedbed for greater electoral political participation.” The foundation of a strong and stable democratic system requires an informed citizenry: people willing and able to put forth ideas and solutions to problems facing their communities and their nation. Thus, the importance of providing civic education and promoting community engagement from an early age is paramount to developing the next generation of leaders.

**Election Monitoring and Observation**

2013 marked a significant shift in Jordan’s parliamentary elections oversight. In 2010, they were managed by the Ministry of Interior whereas the 2013 elections were administered by the newly created Independent Election Commission (IEC). This change was critical to ensuring a more organized, free, and fair election. To help monitor Jordan’s 2013 elections, NDI-J worked with three domestic partners in Jordan: the Al-Hayat Civic Coalition for Election Monitoring (RASED), the Identity Center, and the National Center for Human Rights (NCHR). 250 long-term observers (LTOs) and approximately 5,000 short term observers (STOs) were present in Jordan.
leading up to and during election day. NDI-J provided a variety of assistance to their partners including comprehensive planning sessions, trainings, relevant materials, and suggested best practices. Furthermore, NDI-J brought in election monitoring specialists to assist partners with their needs, organized trips to foreign election sites, and coordinated post-parliamentary election voter surveys.

The different methods NDI-J employed during the 2013 elections were crucial to the success of their election-monitoring program. NDI-J was a constructive partner whereby respective CSOs could request assistance and advice when needed, while retaining autonomy over final decisions and publication content—a practice commended by each of NDI-J’s partners in this area. They highlighted NDI-J’s ready availability for consulting and technical assistance, which allowed for a free-flow of information and communication between NDI-J and its partners. This level of approachability was vital to NDI-J’s ability to form a strong working relationship with each partner.

The team found NDI-J’s election monitoring program to be commendable, but identified three specific areas in which NDI-J can strengthen its efforts before the next parliamentary elections.

Election Monitoring and Observation—Recommendations

1. *Maintain a relationship with the Independent Election Commission, regardless of its current shortcomings, and work to bolster its capacity.*

Jordan’s 2012 Electoral Law achieved two notable successes: granting legitimacy to the reports of monitoring organizations (especially those partnered with NDI-J) and establishing the IEC to conduct electoral processes independent from the Ministry of Interior. As it currently stands, however, there is considerable concern from NDI-J’s partners about the IEC’s organizational capacity. After the election, the IEC became largely disorganized and many question its ability to remain autonomous from the government through which it is funded. If
these concerns are not addressed by the next parliamentary elections, the IEC’s effectiveness and credibility will suffer.

Despite the IEC’s current shortcomings, it remains superior to its predecessor, the Ministry of Interior, with the latter’s historically biased and wholly inadequate election oversight. NDI-J staff should therefore be diligent to maintain communication and remain available to provide technical assistance to the IEC in order to address these concerns and help improve the Commission’s overall capacity. Doing so is critical to ensuring that Jordan’s elections are free, fair, and transparent.

2. **Continue to monitor its partner organizations in terms of credibility, reliability, and effectiveness.**

Several persons of authority on the subject communicated to the team that the National Center for Human Rights (NCHR) has precipitously lost credibility among its peers due to a recent change in leadership. Though there are contracts and other considerations involved, NDI-J should continuously evaluate the effectiveness, reliability, and public perception of its partner election observation organizations. This is vital to ensuring both the continued effectiveness of NDI-J’s partners and its own credibility in terms of who it decides to partner with. Despite the sensitivity of the situation due to a longstanding professional relationship, NDI-J should address NCHR’s recent descent over the past two years. If NCHR is unwilling to make necessary reforms, the team advises that NDI-J drastically limit the amount of funding and manpower dedicated to the organization in order to redirect funds and support to other, more effective organizations.

* Names omitted due to the sensitivity of information provided.
General Recommendations

1. Consider the importance of religion in Jordanian society and work within a religiously-inclusive framework to achieve its objectives.

Interfaith dialogue and relationships provide an opportunity for individuals to combine their efforts to promote human dignity, tolerance, peace, justice, and other core tenets of democracy through religious discourse. Partnering with interfaith organizations will provide NDI-J the opportunity to work closely with religious leaders to promote democratic values on a grassroots level. Interfaith organizations are wide-reaching and have access to many sectors of society.21

Interfaith organizations encourage communication among various religious groups and promote shared values and ideas. Specifically, NDI-J should consider working with the Jordanian Interfaith Coexistence Research Center (JICRC). The JICRC and its director, Father Nabil Haddad, have developed a rapport among Jordanians of all religious backgrounds, as well as imams and other religious leaders in Jordan. Recognizing their influence, Father Haddad has used these relationships to foster an inclusive model of coexistence in Jordan.22

Religious discourse has strong influence on the value system of adherents and plays a significant role in political socialization. NDI-J can use the influence and know-how of religious leaders to promote universal principles of democracy and frame it in a way most consumable by all faiths.23
An interfaith approach to democracy is one that is credible, respected, and tailored to reflect the importance of religion in Jordanian society. Introducing and teaching democratic values through religious discourse will disprove democracy as a purely Western concept. Instead, it will illustrate that democratic values are inherent within the Jordanian social fabric and help to strengthen civil society through shared religious values, which support the core tenets of democracy. Finally, partnering with the JICRC will help to increase NDI’s legitimacy in Jordan, as working with interfaith organizations through a religious framework will strengthen NDI-J’s position as a driver of inclusive, democratic change.

2. **Provide additional technical support to its CSO partners by developing effective advocacy strategies and trainings that ensure policy papers have broader impact and reach.**

Policy papers simplify and synthesize important political, economic, and social issues of interest in order to affect policy change. They allow the public and parliamentarians to better understand issues and potential solutions, but only if the papers are disseminated to the appropriate audience and stakeholders. NDI-J provides funding, technical support, and training on how to write policy papers but does not provide sufficient support in training CSOs on how to mobilize public and political support to gain traction on important issues—a deficiency highlighted by almost all of NDI-J’s partners. Though portions of policy papers funded by NDI-J have been found in proposed legislation, many fail to gain notice in parliament or in the public sphere.

For example, Dr. Mohammad Al-Jrebie of the Al-Thurayya Center suggested NDI-J implement a “final phase” to Al-Thurayya’s grant, which includes advising and planning an advocacy campaign to ensure policy paper recommendations are communicated to the appropriate audiences. To ensure that the public and, ideally, policymakers have crucial information outlined by policy papers, NDI-J can provide grantees advice on how to develop an advocacy campaign, communicate with policymakers, and build a network of supporters. Recommendations will gain more traction if CSOs can galvanize different constituencies with a common goal, build legitimacy and support for or against an issue, raise public awareness, and solidify resources to support policy change. NDI-J’s partner organizations must be able to develop an action plan that is tailored to a variety of audiences, including media outlets,
community leaders, and elected officials. NDI-J trainings should provide techniques on how to effectively communicate with these audiences using a variety of avenues such as meetings, hearings and testimonies, in-person briefings.

Finally, while NDI-J provides trainings on how to conduct focus groups, the team also recommends facilitating community events or town-hall meetings as an additional advocacy strategy. NDI-J should provide the necessary resources and expertise to assist its partner organizations in organizing community events in an effort to increase publicity and efficacy of policy paper recommendations.

3. **Expand Ana Usharek and Usharek+ programming to youth not enrolled in universities and the broader community, while targeting unreached segments of the population.**

Based on empirical observations, NDI-J’s Usharek programs, which engage university students in political debate and civic education, have been successful in spurring interest and momentum in support of governmental reform in Jordan. However, because the programs’ activities are held on university campuses, they do not reach a significant portion of the youth population who are not in higher education. NDI-J staff also noted that the few conservative students that participate in Usharek programs ultimately drop out due to pressure from friends and family or because NDI-J’s framing of particular issues alienates them. Thus, in order to promote broad-based civic participation and acceptance of democratic ideals at the grassroots level, it is important to reach various socio-economic groups as well as those largely influenced by tribal, Islamist, or conservative values.

To promote civil discourse and community activism in Jordan, NDI-J should work to create new versions of Ana Usharek and Usharek + programs under a “town hall” format adapted for small and medium-sized towns. This type of program should feature breakout groups for men and women (aged 24+), and youth (aged 18-24+). These repackaged versions of Usharek should offer a revamped curriculum that appeals to an older cohort as well as conservative elements of society and tribes. “Town hall” Usharek programs should continue
to advance NDI-J’s core principles while incorporating messaging that appeals to respective target groups. For example, a program targeting conservative Muslims could include discussions on how the “shura” (consultation) concept of the first caliphs can be seen as a precursor to democracy and underscore that democratic values are not incompatible with Islam. In doing so, NDI-J can gradually mobilize broader support among powerful sectors of society and mitigate any suspicions of working with U.S.-based organizations.

4. Increase outreach to groups that have not expressed interest in working with NDI-J.

NDI-J’s impact would be greatly enhanced by pursuing a relationship with groups that do not currently seek its help, including East Bank tribal elites, the Islamic Action Front, and political actors tied to the army and security services. NDI-J staff claimed that while their assistance is available to all, disempowered groups tend to seek support more than those with political clout.

Though women, youth, and small political parties have benefited largely from NDI-J’s assistance, meaningful governmental reform cannot occur until other influential groups are equally invested in the reform process.
To effectively engage with these groups, NDI-J must identify appropriate stakeholders such as religious leaders, tribal elders, or elected officials with experience in the security sector. NDI-J should approach them to learn why current programs are not appealing to them and incorporate feedback when attempting to establish relationships and develop appropriate programming. Expanding the number of Jordanians engaged in a national dialogue will put increased pressure on the King and the legislature to implement reform.

NDI-J already has a productive relationship, for example, with representatives of the Islamic Centrist or Al Wasat Party, an offshoot of the Islamic Action Front dedicated to solving societal problems through democratic processes. Engaging the larger Muslim Brotherhood in NDI-J’s civil society and legislative strengthening efforts, however, will require that it characterize community decision making in terms of “shura” (consultation) and constituent services as part of elected officials’ obligation to a national “ummah” (community) that they lead.

5. Establish a platform for virtual collaboration between members of parliament in Jordan and their counterparts in other countries, and incorporate a student exchange component into its Usharek programs.

During interviews with MPs, several expressed interest in connecting with their regional and international counterparts, specifically in Latin America and Eastern Europe, given the recent democratic transitions in these regions. Virtual exchanges offer many benefits including cost-effectiveness, the ability to transcend geographical boundaries, more frequent contact with a broader network of partners, and a platform to share ideas and experiences.

NDI partnered with UNWOMEN, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, United Nations Development Program, and the Inter-Parliamentary Union to launch an Arabic version of the International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics (iKNOW Politics) in 2009. This virtual platform allows women in leadership positions to engage in dialogue with like-minded women from around the world, share ideas and expertise, and build strong social networks. iKNOW Politics has sponsored e-discussions with more than 120 participants from 35 countries on topics highly relevant to Jordan’s female MPs, such as women’s caucuses, fundraising strategies for women in politics, and gender quotas.26

NDI-J should leverage NDI’s established partnership with iKNOW Politics to ensure female MPs are aware of this excellent resource, and urge them to join online discussions to share experiences, access useful information, and benefit from online training courses. Further, NDI-J should work with iKNOW Politics and regional/global NDI offices to expand its program to incorporate a collaborative platform for male MPs. Both male and female MPs can benefit from the utility of virtual exchanges by networking with counterparts in countries with shared experiences to identify best legislative practices and areas for reform. Subsequent ideas and
recommendations can be adopted by the Jordanian MPs in order to strengthen their individual capacity and that of the legislature as a whole.

Finally, NDI-J should consider incorporating a virtual or in-person exchange component into its Usharek programs. Research has shown the many and varied benefits of student exchanges, as they stimulate creative thinking, strengthen multicultural understanding, and enhance personal and educational development. Usharek students were eager to learn about our campaign experiences and advocacy work, and sought advice on how to effectively run campaigns and galvanize student involvement, highlighting the efficacy of virtual or in-person exchanges.

Soliya Incorporated’s flagship initiative, the Connect Program, “allows students to connect to a global community of peers, engage in dialogue, and build respectful relationships across national, cultural, religious, and ideological boundaries” through an online videoconferencing application. A sister organization of Search for Common Ground, Soliya Incorporated works to pioneer “cross-cultural education programming and develop models for constructive online engagement.” Soliya’s Connect Program currently operates in three universities across Jordan—the University of Jordan, Philadelphia University, and Hashemite University—which facilitates partnership between Soliya and NDI-J. While there are merits to both in-person and virtual exchange programs, virtual exchanges have the added benefit of being more cost-effective and enabling access to a broader network of individuals. Ultimately, though, any form of student exchange would serve to benefit Jordanian students and enhance civic engagement.
Conclusion

The team’s positive assessment of NDI-J’s current work and overall favorable remarks from its partners illustrate NDI-J’s programmatic strength in the areas of legislative strengthening, women’s political participation, youth engagement, election observation and support for civil society. While NDI-J has achieved significant gains in these areas, the team identified ways in which current programming can be expanded to further its stated goals and broaden its reach. Overall, NDI-J should increase technical and advocacy support to partner CSOs, conduct targeted and inclusive outreach to a wider population, establish virtual or in-person international exchange programs, and increase work on critically-important issue areas like enhancing women’s economic empowerment and bolstering political parties.

Recommendations from this study strongly indicate that long-term, democratic reform in Jordan must be achieved by a two-pronged approach: bottom-up advocacy that enhances democratic civic culture and grassroot efforts, coupled with top-down reform to open up Jordan’s political system and allow for pluralistic democracy to take root. NDI-J’s continued democracy support at the community, local, and national level is therefore imperative to strengthening Jordan’s democratic institutions and cultivating an informed citizenry that participates equally in politics, the workforce, and civic activity.
Endnotes


22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.


30. Ibid.
Appendix A

List of Interviews in the U.S.

Wednesday, 22 January 2014

Interviewee: Lindsay Workman, Senior Program Manager
National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI)
Location: American University

Friday, 7 February 2014

Interviewee: Dr. Charles Kiamie and Anne K. Womer
U.S. Department of State—Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI)
Location: Casey’s Coffee, 508 23rd Street NW

Monday, 10 February 2014

Interviewees: Rama Halaseh and Ashley Ross, Program Officers
International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX)
Location: IREX Headquarters

Tuesday, 11 February 2014

Interviewee: Cindy Collins, Adjunct Professor
American University - School of International Service
Location: American University
Interviewee: Saji Prelis, Director of Youth Programming
Search for Common Ground (SFCG)
Location: SFCG Headquarters

Wednesday, 12 February 2014

Interviewee: Karen Farrell, Senior Program Officer
National Endowment for Democracy (NED)
Location: NED Headquarters

Thursday, February 13, 2014
Interviewee: Kelsi Stine, MENA DM&E Specialist
Search for Common Ground—Tunisia (SFCG—T)
Location: Skype Interview

Friday, February 14, 2014
Interviewee: Christopher Saenger, Jordan Desk
U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)
Location: Starbucks Coffee, 3301 New Mexico Avenue NW

Wednesday, 19 February 2014
Interviewee: Heidi Wagner, Senior Program Officer
Middle East Mercy Corps
Location: Phone Interview

Friday, 28 February 2014
Interviewee: T. Kareema Daoud-Akguc, Jordan Desk
U.S. Department of State—Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs
Location: Phone Interview

Wednesday, 5 March 2014
Interviewee: Marwan Muasher, Vice President for Studies
Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
Location: Course Guest Lecturer, American University

Friday, 7 March 2014
Event: “Women in the New Arab Politics”
Tamara Cofman Wittes, Saban Center for Middle East Policy
Honorable Rabiaa Nejlaoui, Tunisian MP
Honorable Reem Abu Dalbough, Jordanian MP
Honorable Moussa Faraj, Member of Libyan General National Congress
Honorable Fatiha Mouknii, Moroccan MP
Co-Hosted By: NDI and Brookings Institution
Location: NDI Headquarters

Wednesday, 19 March 2014
Interviewee: Lara Ayoub, Co-founder
SADAQA Campaign

Spring 2014
Location: Email Interview

Interviewee: Sean Yom, Assistant Professor
College of Liberal Arts, Temple University

Location: Phone Interview

Thursday, 20 March 2014

Interviewee: Alexander T. Lennon, Editor in Chief
The Washington Quarterly, Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)

Location: The George Washington University

Wednesday, 26 March 2014

Interviewee: Dr. Judith Yaphe, Professor
Elliot School of International Affairs, The George Washington University

Location: Course Guest Lecturer, American University
Appendix B

List of Interviews in Jordan

Sunday, 9 March 2014

Interviewees: Niti Shehu, Jonas Cekuolis, Slobodan Milic, Suzie Abdou
NDI Jordan Senior Management
Location: NDI Jordan Boardroom, Amman, Jordan

Interviewees: Jonas Cekuolis, Dalia Bseiso, Rita Al Tarawaneh
NDI Jordan Parliamentary and Civil Society Teams
Location: NDI Jordan Boardroom, Amman, Jordan

Interviewees: Slobodan Milic and Youth Program Coordinators
NDI Jordan Youth Political Participation Team
Location: NDI Jordan Boardroom, Amman, Jordan

Monday, 10 March 2014

Interviewees: Suzie Abdou and Women’s Program Coordinators
NDI Jordan Women’s Political Participation
Location: NDI Jordan Boardroom, Amman, Jordan

Interviewees: MP Mustafa Al-Amawi, Chairperson
Islamic Centrist Bloc
MP Madallah Al-Tarawneh, Secretary General
Al-Wasat Al-Islami Party
NDI Representative: Dalia Bseiso, Program Officer, NDI Jordan Parliamentary Strengthening Program
Location: Islamic Centrist Party Office, Amman, Jordan

Interviewee: Mona Al-Alami, Director
Jordan Center for Civic Education (JCCES)
Location: JCCES Headquarters, Amman, Jordan

Interviewee: MP Tamam Al-Riyati, Coordinator of the Women’s Caucus
NDI Representative: Shatha, NDI Jordan Women’s Program Coordinator
Location: The Parliament, MP Al-Riyati’s Office, Amman, Jordan

Interviewees: Father Nabil Haddad, Maria Benjamin, Jacob Lang
Jordanian Interfaith Coexistence Research Center (JICRC)
Location: JICRC Headquarters, Amman, Jordan

Interviewee: Jennifer Birch, Head of Programs

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Identity Center
Location: Identity Center Headquarters, Amman, Jordan
Interviewee: Jeff Lilley, Country Director
International Republican Institute (IRI) Jordan
Location: IRI Jordan Conference Room, Amman, Jordan
Interviewee: Rana Sabbagh, Executive Director
Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism (ARIJ)
Location: ARIJ Headquarters, Amman, Jordan

Tuesday, 11 March 2014

Interviewee: Hussein Abu Rumman
Al-Quds Center for Political Studies
NDI Representative: Rita Al Tarawaneh
Location: Al-Quds Center for Political Studies Headquarters, Amman, Jordan
Interviewee: Ayoub Nammour
Al-Hayat Center for Civil Society Development
NDI Representative: Rita Al Tarawaneh
Location: Al-Hayat Center for Civil Society Development Office, Amman, Jordan
Interviewee: Ahmad Awad
Phoenix Center
NDI Representative: Rita Al Tarawaneh
Location: Phoenix Center Office, Amman, Jordan
Interviewee: Dr. Mohammad Al-Jrebie’
Al-Thuraya Center
Location: Al-Thuraya Center Office, Amman, Jordan
Interviewee: University of Jordan Students (names omitted)
Location: University of Jordan Campus, Amman, Jordan

Wednesday, 12 March 2014

Interviewee: Maisoon Amarneh
Jordan Economic and Social Council (ESC)
Location: ESC Office, Amman, Jordan
Interviewee: H.E. Nuha Maaytah
General Federation of Jordanian Women (GFJW)
Location: GFJW Headquarters, Amman, Jordan
Intervieweees: George Kara’a, Technical Director
Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance Office, U.S. Agency USAID
Lisa Kenna, Political Counselor
U.S. Embassy in Jordan

Location: IRI Jordan Conference Room, Amman, Jordan

Interviewee: H.E. Abla Abou Olbeh
HASHD Political Party
NDI Representative: Aseel, NDI Jordan Women’s Program Coordinator
Location: HASHD Party Office, Amman, Jordan

Interviewee: MP Jamil Al-Nimri
NDI Representative: Dalia Bseiso
Location: The Parliament, MP Al-Nimri, Amman, Jordan

Interviewee: H.E. Asma Khader
Jordanian National Commission for Women (JNCW)
NDI Representative: Aseel, NDI Jordan Women’s Program Coordinator
Location: JNCW Headquarters, Amman, Jordan

Thursday, 13 March 2014

Interviewee: Maram Al-Rabadi
National Center for Human Rights (NCHR)
Location: NCHR Headquarters, Amman, Jordan

Interviewees: Representatives of the King Abdullah Fund for Development (KAFD) and All Jordan Youth Commission (AJYC)
Location: AJYC Headquarters, Amman, Jordan

Interviewees: Riad Al Khouri
Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
Location: @Books Cafe, Amman, Jordan

Interviewees: Al Al-Bayt University (AABU) Students and Program Coordinators
Location: AABU Campus, Mafraq, Jordan

Interviewees: Hashemite University (HU) Students and Program Coordinators
Location: HU Campus, Zarqa, Jordan
Appendix C

List of Standardized Interview Questions

1. What does democracy mean to you?

2. Do you think it is appropriate that NDI should be promoting democracy in Jordan? Explain.

3. Do you feel that democratic reforms in Jordan are on the right track? Why do you feel this way?

4. Please describe your, or your organization’s, relationship with NDI.

5. What are the most positive aspects of your, or your organization’s, relationship with NDI?

6. What supports do you need that you don’t currently receive?

7. Are there supports that you currently receive that are unnecessary or overlapping?

8. In your opinion, what is the largest obstacle for democratic reform in Jordan?

9. How do you participate in your community or in your government? Why do you choose to participate (or refrain from participating) in this way?

10. What would encourage you to be more civically engaged or politically active?
Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this report are solely those of the authors and do not represent Ambassador Sally Shelton-Colby, American University, or the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI).