

Engaging Political Parties
In Post-Conflict Parliaments

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I. The National Democratic Institute

The National Democratic Institute is an international NGO supporting the efforts of democrats worldwide. Since its inception in 1984, NDI has worked in over 60 countries, including 20 post-conflict countries, such as El Salvador, Nicaragua, Mozambique, East Timor, Afghanistan, Sierra Leone, Angola, Cambodia, Bosnia, Kosovo and more recently Sudan, Iraq, and Liberia.

The support provided by NDI has extended to political parties, election authorities, civic groups and parliaments, complimenting the broader efforts of the international community to: secure a negotiated peace settlement; prepare the legal framework for elections and the establishment of a democratic society; and support functioning institutions of governance.

Currently, NDI is working on two reports which analyze our best practices in conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction. The first report, titled “*Approaching Political Violence through Conflict Mitigation*”, looks at mechanisms used to mitigate anticipated political violence in the short-term, and the development of permanent mechanisms that can resolve conflict before violence has the opportunity to occur. The second report is “*Building Confidence in Post-Conflict Societies, Lessons Learned from NDI Programming in Afghanistan, East Timor, Iraq, Kosovo, Liberia and Sierra Leone*”. Both reports will soon be available on our website at www.ndi.org.

II. International Engagement In Post-Conflict Societies

The role of the international community in providing support in post-conflict environments cannot be underestimated. The influence and ability of international donors and organizations in bringing factions to the table, or keeping parties engaged in a peace process, has been proven on countless occasions. The challenge continues to be the ability of the international community to remain engaged past the first election, when assistance is as necessary as before. As we begin to think about the role of political

parties in post-conflict society, and the support that the international community can provide to support their participation in parliaments, I would suggest that there are a number of “essential ingredients” that we must all consider in our approach.

Insisting on inclusion:

Developing the legal framework, agreeing on the rules of the game, and shaping the future political landscape needs to be as inclusive a process as possible. Depending on the nature of the conflict and the immediate post-conflict environment, it may be necessary for the international community to overstate, exaggerate and insist on that inclusion.

Rewarding adherence to non violence:

In all peace processes rewards and incentives are required to maintain the momentum of reconciliation and stability. The international community should ensure that rewards are built in at various stages of the process, so that there is a compelling reason for all sides to remain engaged.

Creating political space:

In a post conflict environment there are very few opportunities for the protagonists to interact with each other. Multi party roundtables, study missions, and retreats hosted and facilitated by the international community can provide the important space for parties to engage one another and begin to build productive relationships.

Acting as honest broker:

International organizations which are respected by all parties to a conflict and without vested interests can play a critical role, serving as a go-between with parties on all sides of the divide in negotiating agreements, codes of conduct, or helping to diffuse contentious issues.

Providing resources:

It is important to recognize the need to create a level playing field by providing technical and financial resources to former warring political forces. In particular, the international community should recognize the need to provide financial resources to those groups that have no access to legitimate sources of funding.

Managing expectations:

The euphoria of a peace accord can create high expectations among the groups laying down arms and citizens who are looking forward to a more productive and prosperous country. Yet, the realities of post-conflict societies may be much different. The international community can help to manage these expectations against reality by creating a healthy political climate that is inclusive, open and built on consensus.

III. Supporting Political Parties in Post-Conflict Societies

Political parties play a critical role in representing interests, aggregating preferences and forming governments, but also in managing conflict and promoting peace and stability. They also play the broader role of recruiting and preparing candidates to run for office, organizing the electoral competition for power, crafting policy alternatives, setting the policy making agenda, forming effective governments, and integrating groups and individuals into the democratic process. ***In fact, political parties are engaged with what is perhaps the most strategic responsibility of modern democracy building: to prepare and select candidates for parliamentary and presidential elections and then to support them in positions of leadership and government where the implementation of democratic reforms takes place.***

The past two days have been spent discussing the various ways in which the international community can support the efforts of parliaments in post-conflict societies. And I have been asked to speak about the role of political parties in those post-conflict parliaments. While there are a number of strategies that can be employed to strengthen the role of parties in parliament, which will both reduce conflict and encourage reconciliation, I

would like to first take a few minutes to discuss the importance of engagement and support of political parties through the post-conflict continuum.

Ensuring political stability and peace requires an inclusive political process as well as an inclusive system of government which incorporates the views of parties from all sides – giving them a stake in the system and an interest in sustaining the peace. I believe there are five critical areas where we must engage and support political parties, in order to ensure that warring factions will remain at peace and be prepared for participation in government. *These require that parties are: 1) included and engaged in the decisions related to the creation of democratic framework; 2) provided opportunities to build confidence in working with their opponents; 3) supported in their transformation from resistance or rebel groups into political organizations; 4) prepared to compete for elections; and finally 5) assisted to take on their role as elected leaders in parliament.*

Within each of these areas, technical and financial assistance can be provided by international donors and implementers, which will directly impact the ability of political parties to function in parliament and govern effectively. Assistance should be provided in ways that encourage consensus; strengthen and reward multi-ethnic groupings and policies; and is contingent upon a renunciation of violence.

Failing to recognize the importance of support to parties in these stages of post-conflict reconstruction will only undermine our broader efforts to prepare parties for the important work in governing a post-conflict parliament. If parties are not engaged early on in the process, giving them a stake and a voice in deciding the rules of the game, they may likely abandon the institutions of government, boycott parliament, and possibly revert to conflict as a means of achieving their goals.

III. Engaging Parties in Developing a Democratic Framework

As the primary vehicle for voting on constitutional frameworks, and enacting laws that govern the activity of parties and the administration of elections, political parties are an

essential player in designing the rules of the game in a post-conflict democracy. Their agreement on the rules is essential in preventing former warring factions from returning to conflict.

Yet in some post-conflict countries, transparency and inclusive decision making are often sacrificed for the sake of expedience and stabilization. Often the international community pushes for elections and views the electoral contest as an exit strategy, yet holding them prematurely and without consensus on the rules of the electoral competition can easily destabilize a nascent democratic system. The international community can assist by encouraging broad based participation in the initial phases of constitutional and electoral design, even if it may mean slowing down the process.

Beginning in late 2001, NDI sought to lessen the possibility of renewed violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) by attempting to build the organization and operational capacity of parties to participate in the peace talks known as the Inter-Congolese Dialogue (ICD). To achieve this goal, the Institute established a technical secretariat based at the negotiations in Sun City, South Africa, that provided technical assistance and expertise to non-armed political parties on issues related to the peace talks. NDI's objective was to strengthen the ability of parties to effectively engage in the dialogue and to come a genuine consensus on the terms of the peace agreement.

Providing political leaders with information about the views and expectations of citizens can also be of great assistance to parties during the preliminary periods of the process. In many circumstances, armies, rebel groups, or parties to a conflict have lost touch with the needs and expectations of ordinary citizens as they pursued military supremacy. Often times, there are few lines of communication between citizens and warring factions. Civic engagement and discourse is abandoned during conflict periods, radio and television news is often limited, and the voices of disaffected citizens are sometimes invisible to the competing forces.

In most post-conflict countries, NDI has conducted focus group surveys, or public opinion polling (to the extent possible), as a first step in identifying issues and priorities of the common citizen. This information can often be illuminating to the rebel or resistance leader who believes that his military ambitions reflected the goals of citizens. In Afghanistan, East Timor and Sudan, among many other countries, NDI conducted focus group surveys immediately after the cessation of armed conflict. Trained moderators met with small groups of citizens in representative areas of the country, engaging them in discussions about their expectations for peace and their priorities for development. The information gained through these discussions provided important information that was eventually included in constitutional drafts. In East Timor for example, citizens underscored their desire to be involved in the process of contributing to a constitutional draft, and expressed a strong desire for the protection their basic civil rights. In Afghanistan, the issues were more stark. Polling found that “war lords” – those who were engaged in the former warring factions – had great popular support and legitimacy among many citizens.

Providing expertise, ideas and comparative models to political parties on constitutional design, electoral and political party laws is also essential to ensuring a lasting peace. All too often, many parties to a conflict do not have the human or financial resources to prepare themselves with the skills and techniques necessary to negotiate and draft constitutions and laws which ultimately decide the role of political parties and of the legislature. In order to develop consensus among the warring or competing factions, these groups must be provided with information, advice and expertise in order to make fully informed decisions about various political arrangements. Providing this information and assistance often requires a light touch and should necessarily be provided in a way that allows parties to make informed decisions on their own. At the same time, the international community and its financial and technical resources can serve as incentives to encourage parties to adopt constitutional arrangements, electoral and political party laws that reward political moderation and prohibit the use of violence.

In Sudan for example, after the peace accord went into effect in 2004, one of the first priorities to be dealt with was the drafting of a constitution that would govern northern and southern Sudan for the next six years, known as the Interim National Constitution (INC). This constitution was to be designed and negotiated between the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) and representatives of the government in Khartoum. The SPLM was severely disadvantaged in this process, as it had limited resources and few individuals who were capable of preparing for these negotiations.

Critical to SPLM's continued buy-in to the process was the international community's ability to provide comparative constitutional models, legal experts and drafters, along with computers, software and the financial resources to travel between Khartoum and Rumbek, Sudan, where the negotiations took place. While there were a number of international donors and organizations which offered legal assistance during the constitutional drafting stage, much of it was rebuffed because of the approach that was taken by the international community. Some of those providing assistance merely presented a fully drafted constitution, which completely overlooked the need for SPLM to make independent decisions among themselves and their party officials. Other international organizations wanted to provide draft language or ideas on only particular issues that were important to their organizational agenda, such as freedom of religion or women's rights. Again, the utility of this advice and assistance was limited, because of the approach provided the international community.

NDI was asked by the SPLM to support its efforts in drafting a new constitution because the Institute had conducted focus group research throughout Southern Sudan once the peace agreement was signed. This research gathered information about citizen's views of the peace process and their priorities and expectation for the future of Sudan. For example, universal education ranked as the top priority among citizens, outranking the desire for elections. Dr. John Garang, the President of the SPLM and the leadership of the party found these reports to be very useful, and asked us to assist in providing comparative information on constitutions.

At their request, we began by providing the SPLM with over 20 comparative constitutions, many of which had come out of post-conflict countries. We made no recommendations for a particular issue or approach, only offers for further assistance. It came slowly and gradually, but ultimately they asked for a preliminary draft, and then for technical advisors and legal experts. Over the course of 2005, NDI provided the SPLM with ongoing legal experts who traveled inside Southern Sudan and worked with the SPLM's technical team, listening to their objectives and drafting language that embodied the international standards for democratic societies. Without the financial support of international donors and technical support of NDI and other organizations, the SPLM could have opted out of the process and returned to conflict.

IV. Building Confidence Among and Between Parties

In most post-conflict situations warring factions and political parties have had few opportunities to engage with one another directly, aside from the negotiation around peace settlements and constitutional designs. Animosities are deep and distrust is often high among former combatants. Even when there is a willingness to work collaboratively with one another, it is sometimes difficult for these parties to be seen together publicly out of fear that their supporters will misinterpret their dialogue.

Mechanisms that provide opportunities for political opponents to engage one another in a constructive, non-political environment, outside the glare of the public, can serve diffuse tensions and forge relationships and cross-party cooperation, setting the stage for productive lines of communication in a pluralistic society and importantly, further down the road, as parties in parliament.

Study missions, targeted to countries that have important and valuable strategies for resolving conflict, can sometimes provide opposing parties with an opportunity to learn about solving problems and to learn about one another as individuals. In June of 1997, NDI brought opposing parties from Northern Ireland to South Africa to learn how the racially divided society overcame one of history's most complicated conflicts. In

attendance were 27 leaders of Northern Ireland's nationalist and unionist parties, representing the two sides of the political divide, who had limited direct exposure to one another before the trip. While the two factions insisted on traveling in separate airplanes, and eating and drinking in separate facilities within the same hotel, they spent time together hearing first-hand from more than two dozen key South African negotiators who described how they reached a "workable" negotiating model; established a parallel and complementary negotiation process; and created mutually acceptable procedures and principles to guide their deliberations. This study mission, targeting key political party leaders resulted in bringing them together and helping them formulate a policy for negotiation under the new Belfast talks, which occurred in late 1997.

In 2000, NDI brought hundreds of political leaders to Los Angeles to observe the Democratic National Convention. Sitting on a bus one evening as we traveled to the convention center, I saw two of the Angolan participants strike up a conversation. One was representing the rebel group UNITA, and the other an MPLA minister. It was the first time that either gentleman had spoken to one another in over ten years. Their conversation carried over throughout several days, and while the conflict in Angola did not come to end for another two years, both leaders have since told me that their conversation in Los Angeles was breakthrough in the communication between the two parties, which ultimately settled through a peace agreement in 2002.

V. Supporting Parties in Their Development as a Political Party

Providing support to former warring factions as they transform their organizations from military or rebel organizations into representative political parties is an essential and critical element in ensuring a peaceful political transition. Technical assistance, training and financial support can provide parties with knowledge and skills to create new accountable organizations. Assistance can also serve as an incentive to parties to relinquish their military ambitions, and develop the ability to resolve dispute through peaceful negotiation, rather than conflict. The transformation of warring factions into

functioning parties may be the cornerstone for ensuring that parties participate effectively in election and cooperate with one another once in parliament.

Assisting parties to develop mechanisms for internal democracy, with an inclusive decision-making structure; internal party rules; transparent accounting practices; open party conventions; and strong representation of women and minorities – make for a stronger democracy. While these internal changes may take years to achieve, beginning the process of internal party reform immediately after a conflict will support broader efforts to encourage democratic behavior in an election period, and as elected representatives in parliament.

The approach to training and technical assistance should be provided to parties in two ways. Some assistance can be introduced in multi-party settings and seminars, which encourages parties to work with their former enemies, spurring dialogue and the development of cross-party relationships. Activities that focus on organizational development, establishing a party secretariat, communicating with constituents, recruiting new members and candidates, and preparing party poll watchers, are common to all political organizations and can be held in a multi-party setting. These trainings allow former combatants to meet members of opposing parties in a non-confrontational environment, interact directly in dialogue, and begin to learn how to respect opposing voices and opinions.

In several post-conflict countries, such as Bosnia, Sierra Leone, Serbia and Afghanistan, NDI has established multi-partisan, political party resources centers, where parties can use computers and access the internet, use office space for meetings, access training materials and find comparative information, as well as seek the advice of in-house technical experts. These resource centers often provide much needed information that is otherwise unavailable to parties, but also serve as forums where parties can begin to interact with one another in a non-conflict setting.

Other activities such as developing party manifestos and platforms, designing campaign strategies and leadership training may require specialized training for parties on an individual basis. *One of the most challenging and important aspects of transforming factions into political parties has been in creating new lines of authority, decision-making and communication within the party.* This is particularly true for organizations that have spent years, or in some cases, decades, operating as a guerilla or rebel organization. Military structures inherently require strong leadership and command, with absolute obedience from the ranks in carrying out orders. In contrast, healthy political parties require an organizational structure based on consensus and agreement around issues and policies.

In Mozambique, NDI provided technical assistance and training to Frelimo and Renamo, the two longstanding antagonists, and to the smaller parties represented in parliament during the country's reconstruction period. While both of the larger parties faced a need for reorganization of their decision-making structure and lines of authority, Renamo suffered from its inability to delegate authority beyond the party president. All decisions were made directly by party president Afonso Dhlakama, and no decisions could be taken without his consent. This impacted the ability of the party to function in parliament, as President Dhlakama was not an elected representative in the legislature. Decisions about parliamentary debate and voting on legislation were often hampered because Renamo MPs believed they could not make decisions without his approval. When they did, they were often chastised and punished for breaking ranks within the organization.

NDI assisted Renamo and President Dhlakama in changing this organizational structure by encouraging reform through the influence of international recognition. Early in the process, it became clear that President Dhlakama wanted international legitimacy for himself as a leader, and for Renamo as party. As the only organization with official standing in the three largest political international organizations – the Centrists Democrats International (CDI), the Liberal International (LI), and the Socialist International (SI), NDI was well placed in introducing Renamo to the Centrists Democrats. Ultimately, Renamo was accepted as a member, and President Dhlakama

was asked to join the board of CDI where he began to participate in international forums which brought together parties from around the world on a regular basis. In this setting, NDI encouraged party leaders from Europe, Latin America and elsewhere to engage Dhlakama in discussions about holding a party convention, electing new leadership, creating a party caucus in parliament, and empowering the position of Secretary General of the party. Over time, Dhlakama began to listen and accept this advice, and eventually he granted permission for the party to hold its first ever party convention – a turning point for the party and an opening in the decision-making process of the party.

In addition to technical assistance and training, political parties need financial assistance to organize and compete fairly in elections. Often times, former warring factions do not have legitimate sources of funding and at the same time there is little public trust about the parties and no desire to fund them publicly. Even when there is a willingness to publicly fund parties, the state coffers may be empty as a result of war. Without financial assistance, former warring factions may not be able to compete fairly in the electoral process, become disenchanted with electoral outcomes and resist the need to continue to play by the rules of the game. Likewise, without financial assistance, parties may resort to illegal practices to find resources and engage in corrupt practices.

In some instances the international community has established financial mechanisms that support the development of political parties in the early stages of post-conflict reconstruction. While most governments and development agencies resist direct funding to political parties, innovative mechanisms such as multi-donor basket funding, that can be regulated and controlled, have been put in place. Funding can be used as an incentive for parties to embrace multi-ethnic behavior; for increasing their grassroots campaigning; and for creating accountable and transparent financial reporting. Financial assistance can also be an incentive for promoting the participation of women, youth and other disenfranchised minorities.

VI. Preparing Parties to Compete in Elections

Providing support to parties on how to campaign and communicate with voters is essential for parties to believe they are being given an opportunity to further their agenda through the ballot box. Training and technical assistance gives the parties tangible, new skills and provides hope that they can prevail in elections because they will be better trained and organized.

But there must be some ground rules for assistance. In Kosovo, NDI began working in 1999, and immediately conducted a baseline assessment of political parties in the country, examining the history, leaderships, membership, ideology, regional strength and organizational ability of the parties. The assessment sought to determine whether parties met the criteria of 1) adherence to non-violent principles; 2) the ability to absorb NDI assistance; 3) the prospects for the party to be a long-term presence on the political scene and 4) the likelihood that they would accept a democratic and tolerant society.

Representatives from both Albanian and Serb political parties expressed pragmatic, moderate views on their political situation, as well as their desire to work with each other to build a multi-ethnic and democratic Kosovo. However NDI quickly realized that it was not feasible to work with both parties at the same time.

For the first several months, NDI worked only with Albanian parties but maintained a relationship with most minority (non-Serb) parties. NDI's political party work provided technical assistance and a series of training sessions that focused on strengthening parties' roles in elections, such as communication, voter outreach, program development, campaigning, poll watching. NDI then worked with parties elected during the October 28, 2000 municipal elections, preparing them for their work in the new Municipal Assembly. Serbian groups initially refused to buy into the UNMIK structure, preferring instead to operate within the Serbian National Council. Although they refused to field candidates for the October 2000 municipal elections, they expressed a desire to be more engaged. NDI first worked with them in May 2000, conducting seminars that focused on

the role of a political party in influencing events through marshalling public opinion and internal party strengthening, such as program development, party definition, communications, outreach, rather than election-specific training.

Political parties can often be a source of fear for citizens after a conflict is over. Campaign training for parties can help them understand how to conduct themselves in a lawful and peaceful manner that can win the confidence of ordinary citizens. For example in Bangladesh, NDI was able to encourage parties to abide by the Election Commission's code of conduct and agree to it publicly. In Serbia, parties signed a general code of conduct for political campaigning which was made public and announced to citizens. In Kosovo, there was sensitivity about ex-combatants campaigning by visiting people in their homes for the first year after the conflict. NDI worked with the parties to develop strategies that would allow them to engage citizens directly without visiting homes.

VII. Assisting Parties in Parliament

Political parties in post-conflict parliaments face a variety of challenges. The parties represented in parliament take their seats after having been through several phases of political compromise. First, they have agreed to settle their dispute by negotiation rather than military success. Secondly, they have agreed to cooperate in a political arrangement through elections, risking being the political losers rather than the winners. Often parties enter into these compromises with a long history of discrimination, disenfranchisement and animosity. If their political interests have not been fully addressed in the design and process of these political compromises, and if the framework for parliamentary participation is not based on mutual respect and opportunity, there is a risk that they will soon abandon parliament as the vehicle for debate and governance.

Post-conflict parties also enter parliament with *extremely high expectations* from voters who want to see an immediate “peace” dividend. While these parties are often unprepared and inexperienced at law making, they face significant demands and

responsibilities – including crafting and passing new legislation regarding internally displaced persons (IDP's), demobilization, disarmament and reintegration (DDR) of armed groups; re-establishing civilian control over the military; and reconstruction of infrastructure and services. They have to deal with international financing issues related to donor pledges and international lending procedures, but lack requisite experience in budgetary spending and oversight.

In order to address the dual challenges of high expectations and lack of capacity, the international community should provide technical and financial assistance and resources – that encourage consensus and reward compromise. This must be provided, hand in hand, with ongoing support to parties and political organizations – outside of their function in parliament -- which is often abandoned by the international community once elections have been achieved.

Supporting the development of parties encourages them to design cogent political policies rather than individualistic, self-serving positions. The *incentives for parties to remain in the democratic game* are dependent upon their ability to achieve their goals, whether it is greater economic development or social recognition and rights of minority groups. It is therefore critical that all elected political organizations and parties be able to participate in the work of parliament and feel that they have a respected role with certain rights. Opposition parties are a necessary and indispensable component of democratic society and a critical voice in a post-conflict environment. Likewise, minority parties in a legislature must accept the right of the majority to make decisions, provided that they receive reciprocal respect, the right to dissent and to promote alternative policies.

Training and technical assistance should be provided to all parties in parliament so that they have a basic understanding of their roles and responsibilities as elected members of the legislature. This is particularly important for disadvantaged parties who have elected military leaders with little or no political experience. Training, ranging from the process of debate under rules of procedure to the role of committees in overseeing the national government, should be made available. In addition, particular attention should be given

to providing basic negotiating skills for all parties in parliament. Many parliamentarians have not been trained in the art of negotiation, and disadvantaged or weak parties often lose, resulting in tendency to revert to old habits of conflict and violence.

In addition, several key mechanisms should be encouraged by the international community in an effort to reduce tension and provide confidence among parties:

Multi-partisan Management Committees. In many post-conflict countries, parliaments have created a multi-party committee to carry out many of the administrative and financial issues usually empowered in the office of the Speaker. Sometimes known as the Presidium, Speaker's Bureau or Rules Committee, the purpose is to reduce a partisan Speaker's ability to use his or her powers to reward his party, or to punish opposition parties – particularly former warring factions. This institutional arrangement was developed in Kosovo where parliament established a multi-party committee responsible for overseeing most of the traditional responsibilities of the Speaker. This committee was responsible for setting the parliamentary agenda, establishing the parliamentary schedule; introducing the procedures for how bills will be brought to the floor of parliament and how hearings are to be held. The arrangement allowed for minority parties to feel empowered and more much more trusting and confident in the process.

Rules of Procedure. Balancing majority control and the ability to govern effectively with minority participation and the promotion of consensus is essential in post-conflict parliaments. The balance will need to be struck differently in different societies, but rules of procedure play an important role in providing assurances to minority parties that their rights will be respected and can be an incentive their for continued participation. Some of the salient issues that rules of procedure address include: the minimum number required to form a caucus or opposition; whether committee chairs are given to ruling or opposition members; opportunities for debate; and rights for linguistic minorities. Establishing rules that are agreed on by both the majority and minority is essential to sustaining compromise in parliament.

The Committee System. Committees in parliament that are structured so that opposing parties can have fair representation, decision making authority and oversight ability can also reduce tensions and encourage compromise among former warring factions. As is the practice in most parliamentary arrangements, opposition parties should have representation, at least proportionate to its percentage of seats in parliament, on every committee and subcommittee, standing committee or select committee.

In addition, it may be necessary to place opposition parties or former warring factions on the key committees such as defense or oversight of military. This is particularly important in countries where rebel armies have been reintegrated into the national military, by ensuring that opposition members have the ability to monitor and oversee the decisions that the national government is making with respect to military spending and mission. Represented parties should be encouraged to participate in the oversight of all branches of the military including the national armed services; the police; intelligence services; paramilitary forces; presidential guards; border guards; and customs. Other key committees on which opposing parties should play a key role include budget and finance, education and health, and portfolios that oversee the management of the nation's national resources, such as oil and mining.

Constituency Outreach. In order to address the high expectations of citizens in a post-conflict country, political parties need to reach and communicate with citizens on regular basis. Particularly in the early stages of reconciliation, it is critical that parties inform their constituents about a variety of issues including: new laws and regulations; plans for development of the national infrastructure and new social programs; at times, explaining why the pace of re-development is slower than expected. In addition, symbolic public events conducted jointly by majority and minority parties can provide confidence to citizens that the conflict has indeed concluded.

The international community can facilitate constituency outreach efforts by providing training and organizing skills to party cadres and by supporting these efforts financially.

For many elected leaders, monthly salaries do not cover the expenses related to routine constituency visits, nor do parties have resources in their coffers to cover these expenses.

Party Caucuses. Political party caucuses are the key mechanism in which parties decide how to develop policies; assign committee positions; communicate with constituents; and recruit new candidates. During the period in between elections, party caucuses also serve as the public face of a party and are a demonstration of its ability to represent its core constituency. Both financial and technical assistance should be provided to party caucuses on developing policy positions and helping them understand policy information, so that they (as a party and as a caucus) can go beyond the issues that led them to the conflict and on to issues that face the nation as whole.

Technical assistance can be provided to assist parties in developing a caucus structure that allows for elected leadership; members should be assigned to particular issue areas and regions for constituency outreach; and a process should be established that allows for developing consensus on policies programs and legislative strategies. Internal rules for decision-making should be agreed to in writing and as well as the mechanisms for communicating decisions with the party outside of parliament. Within the caucus the party should debate a legislative strategy and should relate this strategy to the party and its leadership outside of parliament.

Ineffective party caucuses can lead to an ineffective parliament, which will remain fragile with risks of returning to conflict. Working with the party caucus to decide on its internal rules, so that members do not disagree with one another or with their external party over policies, voting, and candidates are essential to a stable and productive parliament.

Financial assistance. In order for members of parliament and party caucuses to operate effectively, financial resources must be provided either through state funding mechanisms, or by the international community. While there is great resistance to provide direct funding to political parties and their elected leaders, lack of funding may pose one of the greatest threats to development of political parties, to the development of

cogent policies, and ultimately to the ability of political leaders to govern a democratic society.

The international community can provide much needed financial resources to parties through a variety of mechanisms including: funding international NGOs to provide technical assistance and training to parties and legislatures; funding non-partisan baskets that can be managed either by the international donor community or government agencies such as the registrar of political parties; or through direct budget assistance to governments. The failure to address the financial shortfalls that political parties face around the world will only encourage corrupt practices, illegal acts and potentially undermine transitional democracies.

VIII. Conclusion

Supporting political parties in post-conflict parliaments cannot be addressed in isolation from their participation in the entire reconstruction process. The ability of parties to participate effectively in parliamentary arrangements depends largely on their agreement to the rules of the game, their ability to organize and effectively compete in elections, as well as assurances that once in elected office they will be provided with guarantees for full participation in decision-making and governing.

The international community often sets the pace and agenda for post-conflict reconstruction and inherently has the power and resources to ensure that warring factions and parties are engaged meaningfully throughout the process. This requires ongoing technical advice, training and financial resources to parties before and beyond elections.

Ultimately, the success or failure of conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction largely depends on political leadership of elected politicians. The greatest impact the international community can have in influencing political leadership is to invest in parties over the long run and remain engaged in supporting their development beyond elections.

