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## Profiles of Key Democracy and Good Governance NGOs/Agencies

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# Profiles of Key Democracy and Good Governance NGOs/Agencies

## Introduction

Often referred to as an infrastructure or a 'democracy bureaucracy', the worldwide network of democracy promotion and good governance non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international organizations (IOs), and bilateral agencies is immense and multi-faceted. Although they share a general mission of promoting democracy, each operates with varying goals and foci – and somewhat different definitions of democracy. Nevertheless, they share many common ends: free and fair elections, a responsive and participatory citizenry, rule of law, and transparent institutions.

## National Endowment for Democracy (NED)

[www.ned.org](http://www.ned.org)

The National Endowment for Democracy (NED) is a US-based, congressionally funded, private organization primarily engaged in the writing and proffering of grants to a wide variety of pro-democracy agencies, NGOs, and programmes worldwide. NED was founded in 1983, a year after President Ronald Reagan articulated his 'campaign for democracy' in a speech delivered to the British Parliament. Although sharing many common precepts regarding democratic government and the advantages of democratic transition, the NED and the US government work autonomously of one another in terms of programmes and policy implementation.

NED is primarily involved in 'assisting democrats' across a wide range of political landscapes from closed societies to consolidating democracies. Funding through NED goes most notably to the core institutes, namely, the International Republican Institute (IRI), National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE), and the American Center for International Labor Solidarity (ACILS). In addition to the core institutes, NED provides aid money and expertise to other democracy-promoting organizations and smaller indigenous groups to encourage local, culturally endogenous democracy.

The substantive contribution of NED to the larger field of research, aid, and dialogue in the past 23 years is significant. Its main research arm, the International Forum for

Democratic Studies, established the *Journal of Democracy* in 1994 that includes scholarly debate and practical policy assessments. Also, the Democratic Resource Center, part of the Forum, serves as a nexus for researching and analysing current democracy promotion movements worldwide with a growing library of democracy studies and materials. More recently, NED initiated the World Movement for Democracy ([www.wmd.org](http://www.wmd.org)) in February 1999, which serves as a 'network of networks' dedicated to fostering dialogue and cooperation among the increasing number of democracy-promoting agencies, organizations, and individuals throughout the world. With world conferences held at least every two years, the World Movement seeks to create a central forum for the exchange of ideas and methods from a broad range of policy experts, practitioners, and activists involved with democracy assistance.

NED has elicited both skepticism and optimism from a diverse audience during its 20-plus years of existence. It has been accused of fomenting revolution, interfering with official State Department interests, and perpetuating 'Cold War' rhetoric in its democracy-promoting efforts. To balance this, NED has received much praise as an organization offering a different perspective on democracy promotion from that of the State Department. In fact, much of NED's legitimacy and effectiveness is characterized by its disunion with the government, as NED utilizes differing methods and operates with more policy freedom and mobility than several government agencies with roughly the same agenda (i.e. United States Agency for International Development or USAID – see below). However, claiming to be non-partisan, NED denies that it functions under a value-neutral paradigm; the underlying assumption driving NED being a belief in the universal good of democratic governance.

### **IFES – Democracy at Large (formerly the International Foundation for Election Systems)**

[www.ifes.org](http://www.ifes.org)

IFES was created in 1987 as 'an international, non-profit organization that supports the building of

democratic societies.' Up until 2003, IFES worked solely on providing technical assistance for elections such as ballot papers, ballot boxes, office equipment. Upon expanding its scope in 2003, IFES adopted the headline 'IFES-Democracy at Large' to encapsulate its growing work in building civil society, advancing human rights, good governance, and the rule of law. Still, its principal focus remains election administration, channeling most of its budget (75 million in 2004) to the provision of election commodities.

Based in Washington DC, IFES is different from other major US democracy-promoting organizations in that it includes several non-US citizens on its Board of Directors. Of particular uniqueness, IFES assists in US elections as well, having been called on in the wake of the 2000 election for electoral expertise. Since then, its US assistance is centered mainly on state election systems and compliance issues with HAVA (Help America Vote Act, 2002). The majority of its work is by request, relying on hubs such as the Center for Transitional and Post Conflict Governance, which includes experts from 25 countries that aid in implementation and programme development. Also, the F. Clifton White Applied Research Center for Democracy and Elections offers scholars a resource library of international election materials and references.

IFES operates as both an NGO and a governmental organization, working independently and through government stipulated contracts (mostly for the US Government, but also for other governments). IFES does not award solicited or unsolicited grants and all of its sub-grants are attached to certain programmes and target countries. A large portion of its funding is received through bilateral and multilateral agencies such as USAID and the United Nations but also accepts donations from individuals, corporations, and foundations.

### **Freedom House (FH)**

[www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org)

Freedom House was established by Eleanor Roosevelt, among others, in 1941 as a lobby group to urge that the United States enter World War II to

combat fascism. In its 64 years, it has established itself as a leading organization in advancing freedom and human rights. Freedom House maintains that freedom – especially certain political and civil rights – is only possible in democratic political systems where the government is accountable to its citizens. As such, Freedom House is an adamant proponent of democratic values and political systems while opposing totalitarian and authoritarian regimes.

In the past 15 years, Freedom House has developed into an internationally focused research entity publishing various annual and occasional reports on civil liberties and political rights in every nation. Most renowned among these is its flagship *Freedom in the World* published since 1972 and utilized by members of media, researching scholars, NGOs, and governmental organizations. For instance, the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) employs Freedom House's 16 indices of country performance to determine a country's eligibility for participation in the MCC's aid programme. In addition to research and publication, Freedom House is involved in several advocacy initiatives currently focused on North Korea, Africa, and religious freedom.

Freedom House is governed by a Board of Trustees composed of leading Democrats, Republicans, and independents; business and labour leaders; former senior government officials; scholars; writers and journalists. It receives funding from various foundations and corporations and also from NED, USAID, and the US State Department. Approximately two-thirds of its income comes from government sources including the US, the Netherlands, United Kingdom, Norway, and the European Union. However, Freedom House never accepts funds in the form of contracts from governments or government agencies, claiming its independence and aversion to being an extension of specific governments. Its activity abroad is primarily through field offices (a dozen of which are outside the US) and in exchange and training programmes to assist human rights defenders, journalists, and other civil society actors in places where they are working to expand the boundaries of freedom in their own countries.

## United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

[www.usaid.gov](http://www.usaid.gov)

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is the largest and most expansive contributor to democracy promotion in terms of dollars, countries, and numbers of partners in the US and throughout the world. USAID was established by the Foreign Assistance Act under President John F. Kennedy in an effort to consolidate various aid organizations within the government and to establish a concerted, non-military organization to offer economic and social development assistance. USAID receives foreign policy guidance from the US Secretary of State and articulates avenues in which it may support these objectives by assisting economic growth, health, and democracy.

USAID administers roughly \$1.3 billion annually in programmes under its Democracy and Governance (DG) office, which includes four focus areas: rule of law, civil society, elections and political processes, and democratic governance. DG operates under the assumption that the 'strategic long-term domestic and foreign policy objectives of the United States are best served by enlarging the community of democratic nations worldwide.' In accomplishing this goal, DG is highly decentralized, maintaining 90 field offices that design and implement USAID programmes. In keeping with a decentralized motif, DG works with an array of implementing partners in carrying out its objectives, including NGOs, academic institutions, and private voluntary organizations (PVOs). DG also seeks to build partnerships endemic to specific countries in an effort to facilitate local resource mobilization and action that encourage local participation.

Recently, an exhaustive statistical study was conducted by a group of academics that assessed the entire portfolio of USAID programmes. The general conclusions reached claimed that, in the past 15 years, democracy promotion efforts by USAID have had a beneficial impact on the plight of democracy worldwide. The research also targeted specific areas, avenues, and techniques that are efficacious and outlined renewed promotion in areas and programmes that showed negligible or no impact.

## Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)

[www.sida.se](http://www.sida.se)

The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) is the primary Swedish foreign aid organization under the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. SIDA aims to improve the living standards of the world's poorest groups by supporting economic growth, political independence, and democratic development. SIDA is the result of a merger of the five Swedish development assistance authorities in 1995, responding to the changing landscape and dynamic of political aid worldwide and in an effort to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of Sweden's development aid. SIDA articulates goals, direction, and scale of Swedish bilateral cooperation with major recipient countries through 'country development cooperation strategies.' Using this rubric, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, SIDA, and the recipient country formulate strategy for Swedish development cooperation over a period of 3–5 years, based on the analyses of results achieved and of the country's development needs. Sweden maintains a goal of an aid budget equivalent to 1 per cent of its gross national product (GNP), which the Parliament first approved in 1968.

SIDA has 50 locations throughout the world, including sectional offices and embassy affiliates, where they rely on SIDA staff and local contacts to implement programmes based on overall objectives and local knowledge. Under their Democracy and Social Development Department, SIDA operates its Division of Democratic Governance (DDG), which focuses on issues of democracy, human rights, political participation, and the rule of law. The DGG prepares and manages activities in some 30 countries, working primarily in Africa, Latin America, and Asia to advise SIDA offices abroad. DGG's goal of strengthening democratic processes targets parliaments and other elected bodies and also works towards independence in the judiciary. The DGG and the larger SIDA network also collaborate with many organizations within the democracy-promoting movement especially UN programmes and various international and local NGOs.

## Transparency International (TI)

[www.transparency.org](http://www.transparency.org)

Transparency International (TI) is the world's leading civil society-based organization addressing corruption, including but not limited to political corruption. Defining corruption as 'the abuse of entrusted power for private gain,' TI does not investigate alleged cases or expose individual cases of corruption but rather develops tools for fighting corruption and works in consortium with civil society organizations, companies, and governments. Founded in Germany in 1993, TI now comprises over 90 field chapters and is classified as an international NGO with Secretariat offices in Berlin. TI operates under the precept that corruption at any level of society is antithetical to good democratic governance and as such seeks to eradicate its many forms to further democracy and assist in development. For instance, TI asserts that corruption undermines democracy and the rule of law by compounding political exclusion through fixed elections thereby sustaining the *status quo* and providing little incentive to change or be held accountable by citizens.

Since 1995, TI has published a variety of materials for governments, scholars, and democracy-promoting agencies in the fight against corruption. Most notable among these are the annual Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), Global Corruption Report, Global Corruption Barometer, and Bribe Payer's Index. CPI, along with the World Bank's corruption index, is the most highly used measurement of corruption in scientific research. Even though TI discourages use of its CPI in determining aid eligibility, organizations such as the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) employ the CPI in as much the same manner as Freedom House's indices of political and civil freedom (mentioned above). In gathering corruption data, TI relies on perceptions of foreign analysts and business people interacting with society. In employing this method, TI makes a concerted effort to avoid official cases of corruption as laws and enforcement of laws differs significantly from country to country. TI's contributive relevance to the democratization movement gained noted importance in the mid-1990s when several institutions, the World Bank and the International

Monetary Fund (IMF), found corruption to be a significant obstacle in the path of development and democratization. TI has also been instrumental in advocating the importance of transparency among various international organizations, playing a vital role in the United Nations Convention against Corruption and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) Anti Bribery Convention.

### **International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA)**

[www.idea.int](http://www.idea.int)

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) is an intergovernmental organization of member states from each continent working to promote democracy worldwide. Founded in 1995 and based in Stockholm, IDEA serves principally as an interface for those who analyse and monitor trends in democracy (academics) and those are directly involved in political reform (practitioners and policy makers) at home or abroad. Although the majority of staff is based in Stockholm, IDEA also maintains five regional offices. Besides serving as a forum for dialogue between practitioners, policy makers, and academics, IDEA concentrates on improving countries' electoral process and growing capacity for local governance. In providing electoral assistance, IDEA develops and disseminates voting rules and guidelines that promote accountability, transparency, efficiency, and impartiality in the electoral process.

As an intergovernmental organization, IDEA currently grants membership to 24 states and associate membership to several NGOs. IDEA is funded by contributions from each of its member states and also by complimentary donors such as the European Commission, Inter-American Development Bank, United Nations Foundation, and the International Development Research Centre. IDEA's primary method of democracy promotion is one of facilitation and not propagation, offering assistance and policy options to local and international organizations in setting programme agendas. IDEA makes distinctions between 'democracy drivers' – parliamentarians, civil society organiza-

tions, research institutions – and 'democracy promoters' such as IGOs, NGOs, interregional organizations, and regional organizations. IDEA then positions itself as a facilitator between these two actors to aid in eventual democratic reform and consolidation.

### **United Nations Development Program (UNDP)**

[www.undp.org](http://www.undp.org)

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) is the United Nations global development network and the largest multilateral source of development assistance in the world. UNDP is funded entirely by contributions from member states comprising an annual budget of approximately \$4.44 billion (2005). UNDP is the result of combining the Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance and the United Nations Special Fund in 1971.

UNDP has offices and staff in 166 countries, coordinating global and national efforts to achieve national goals and priorities laid out by host countries. UNDP's Governance Division supports national democratic transitions by providing policy advice and technical support, improving institutional and individual capacity within countries, educating populations about and advocating for democratic reforms, promoting negotiation and dialogue, and sharing successful experiences from different countries. UNDP also supports existing democratic institutions by increasing dialogue, enhancing national debate, and facilitating consensus on national governance programmes. Within the Governance Division, UNDP targets several focus areas of governance including women's empowerment, which works to raise awareness, increase women participation in government structures, and eliminate gender bias in international development frameworks and paradigms. Among UNDP's various research projects and publications is its annual *Human Development Report* (HDR). Each issue of HDR grapples with a persistent problem in the development world, for instance, poverty eradication or people's participation; HDR then combines topical research with recommended policy measures.

## **Department for International Development (DFID)**

[www.dfid.gov.uk](http://www.dfid.gov.uk)

The Department for International Development (DFID) is the United Kingdom Government department responsible for promoting development and reducing poverty overseas. The bulk of DFID's assistance is concentrated on the poorest countries in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. In addition, DFID contributes to eliminating poverty and supporting sustainable development in middle-income countries, as well as helping countries in Central and Eastern Europe to try to ensure that the largest number of people benefit from the process of change. Besides headquarters in London and East Kilbride, DFID has several other offices in Africa and Asia. As a development-funding entity, DFID provides both bilateral and multilateral assistance, bilateral assistance in 2005/06 totalling £2,094 million. In 2005–2006, the European Community's development programme received the largest amount of DFID multilateral assistance (£917 million), followed by the United Nations (£299 million) and the World Bank (£272 million).

Among its numerous programmes, DFID focuses on building civil society and democracy among target states in an effort to enhance development and combat poverty. In accomplishing this, DFID also aids new and consolidating democracies through contributing to existing good governance and civil society strengthening programmes and devising and implementing its own programmes. For example, DFID has supported the recent election process in Afghanistan by providing funds towards programmes implemented by World Bank and UNDP, and by establishing its own programmes to assist in electoral education, election monitoring, and voter registration.

## **Center for Development of Democracy and Human Rights**

[www.demokratia.ru](http://www.demokratia.ru)

The Center for Development of Democracy and Human Rights is a non-governmental public policy and advocacy organization in Russia. The Center's mission is to support development of

democratic institutions and sustainable mechanisms of human rights protection by addressing public policy issues and facilitating civic participation in policy decisions. The Center carries out this mission most tangibly by publishing its monthly review of the Duma's (Russia's lower house of parliament) legislative proposals and recently enacted laws. The publication, *Legislative Process in the State Duma: Human Rights Analysis*, is the only official publication of the sort, seeking to expose citizens to legislative matters through the particular lens of human rights. In doing this, the Center seeks to educate and activate public participation in the legislative process and also advocate on behalf of citizens for human rights in the Russian Parliament.

## **Ghana Center for International Development (GCID)**

[www.cddghana.org](http://www.cddghana.org)

Ghana Center for International Development (GCID) is a policy-oriented think tank and non-profit, non-partisan, and independent research organization based out of Accra, Ghana. Since its inception in 1998, GCID has been actively engaged in promoting democracy, good governance, and the development of a liberal economic environment in Ghana in particular and Africa in general. GCID's founder and executive director E. Gyimah-Boadi is a member of various international councils including the International Forum for Democratic Studies, Transparency International's Ghana chapter, and the editorial board for *Journal of Democracy*.

GCID carries out independent research and local support programmes and also serves as a consultancy conduit in Ghana for larger democracy promotion programmes. Through research and training, GCID provides technical support to local public institutions within Ghana's government such as the judiciary, parliament, and various commissions. In addition, GCID consults with international organizations, NGOs, and government aid programmes such as the National Democratic Institute (NDI), Department for International Development (DFID), and the Swedish International Development Agency

(SIDA). GCID's research focus targets individual perceptions among citizens through quantitative and qualitative surveys and also seeks to assess the quality of governance and level of economic liberalization among Ghanaian institutions. In seeking public perceptions and to gauge public support for political and market reforms, GCID initiated the Afrobarometer project in consortium with both African (such as IDASA – see below) and international organizations.

## **Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA)**

[www.idasa.org.za](http://www.idasa.org.za)

Founded as the Institute for a Democratic Alternative in South Africa in 1987, the IDASA currently initiates, implements, and assists programmes focused on promoting sustainable democracy. IDASA includes both regional (Africa) and local programmes (South Africa) in addition to collaborating with various international organizations aimed at strengthening democratic institutions and growing democratic values. IDASA focuses primarily on the linkage between a civil society and good governance both locally and nationally. Programmes include: the Center for Governance in Africa (CGA) and its two main corollaries, Parliamentary Development in Africa (PDA) and Afrobarometer, seek to educate and facilitate citizen awareness of the governance process. PDA is funded by the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) and works towards improving citizen/parliament interaction. Afrobarometer gathers public opinion data across 18 African countries in an effort to keep policy makers, government officials, and civil society leaders informed about governance perceptions.

The Budget Information Service (BIS) comprises a handful of initiatives centred on promoting good economic governance employing local, regional, and international budgetary education. The Africa Budget Project is partnered with the Washington DC-based International Budget Project (IBP) and works to build increased capacity for governments and citizens to engage good budget policies. The Children's Budget

Initiative (CBI) serves as an advocacy group and research organization for allocation of resources within government to secure children's rights. Similarly, the Women's Budget Initiative (WBI) engages in research, training, and advocacy to increase gender sensitive awareness among governments and organizations.

The IDASA's Local Government Centre (LGC) originated in 1994 to assist local municipalities in making the transition to democratic practices through local electoral politics. Since then, LGC has expanded its work with local governments and municipalities to include training of councillors and local officials, policy development and analysis, and assistance in law and policy making. Naturally, the localized LGC mirrors the larger ambitions of IDASA in working towards local government efficacy and citizen interaction to increasing transparency and social equality.

## **King Prajadhipok's Institute (KPI)**

<http://www.kpi.ac.th/kpi/en>

King Prajadhipok's Institute (KPI) is an independent public organization operating under the supervision of the government of Thailand. KPI was established under the Parliament Secretariat in 1994 and granted independent status by an act of law in 1998. The institute bears the name of King Prajadhipok and its mission is 'promoting democracy to achieve sustainable peace'. The institute primarily undertakes academic work in the form of research, training, and dissemination of information about democracy and governance. KPI also provides consultation on topics related to politics and governance at national and local levels. KPI mainly assists parliamentarians along with other national and local-level politicians, while making a concerted institutional goal to remain politically neutral. KPI aids national- and local-level civil servants, community leaders, private sector leaders, the media, democracy development organizations, academics, students, and the general public. As an organization based solely in Thailand, KPI cooperates with many larger NGOs, national, and international organizations.



## **Institute for Popular Democracy (IPD)**

[www.ipd.ph](http://www.ipd.ph)

The Institute for Popular Democracy (IPD) is a political research and advocacy group assisting social movement groups, NGOs, and progressive local government officials engaged in development work in the Philippines. Beginning its work in 1986, IPD initial goal was to establish pluralist impulses through the Philippines' progressive movements and build coalitions for aid intervention on the national level. Since then, IPD has increased its institutional range to place primary emphasis on research into the local capacity for democratization along three continuums: civil society, state, and the economy. Researching national issues and policies that affect all levels of society, IPD seeks to channel reform movements in local sectors of society that show signs of democratic retardation or economic backwardness. In carrying out its mission, IPD maintains two distinctive programmes, Development Watch and Democracy Watch. Development Watch tracks and analyses national economic conditions such as monetary and taxation policy and also studies local budgeting practices, credit access, and privatization issues. Democracy Watch engages in theoretical, theme, and issue-based research such as the dynamics of local political elites, structures of political power, and local political and electoral reform.

## **Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN)**

[www.dawnorg.org](http://www.dawnorg.org)

Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) is a global advocacy network of southern feminists working for economic and gender justice and political transformation. Founded in 1984, DAWN's work centres on critical research and publication of development structures, policies, and programmes. As such, DAWN seeks to instill gender equality and gender awareness in transforming societies, publishing analyses of topics such as political economy and globalization and political restructuring and social transformation. Most of DAWN's research challenges the dominant model, whether economic or political,

as it focuses explicitly on the plight of poor women in the midst of transforming societies.

Much of DAWN's global advocacy work involves working in partnership with other organizations and networks to reform international institutions, ensure that governments live up to the commitments they made in international conferences, and mainstream gender in NGO advocacy initiatives. DAWN's work is supported by a wide variety of agencies and foundations including the Ford Foundation and the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA).

## **Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA)**

[www.cpalanka.org](http://www.cpalanka.org)

The Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA) is an independent, non-profit public policy research institute in Sri Lanka. Founded in 1996, CPA primarily seeks to strengthen the contributive capacity of civil society in the larger public policy debate through programmes of research and advocacy. CPA identifies the two broad fronts of non-violent conflict resolution and democratic governance as its key avenues of research and publication. CPA receives the bulk of its funding from bilateral and multilateral agencies and foundations.

CPA channels research reports on public policy to citizens and makes policy recommendations to policy makers. In carrying out this task, CPA publishes extensively on various topics pertinent to good governance. Also, CPA serves as secretariat of the Centre for Monitoring Election Violence (CMEV), working in consortium with two other local Sri Lankan organizations, the Free Media Movement (FMM) and the Coalition against Political Violence. In this capacity, CPA actively monitors nationwide elections and publishes subsequent reports detailing election-related violence and incidences of malpractice. Although Sri Lankan state officials have often been at odds with CMEV, the public places significant faith and confidence in CMEV's mission of independent election monitoring and regards its role to be vital for free and fair elections. Furthermore, since 2003, CDA has joined with various organizations and government agencies

such as the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and USAID in publishing its Social Indicator (SI) index. The SI index, which gathers perceptions among citizens on socio-economic and political issues, serves as the

primary polling nexus for Sri Lanka, informing CDA's advocacy work and also the larger NGO and IGO community.

*Compiled by Aaron Stuvland*