SEIZE THE DAY, SEIZE THE DATA

POSTCARDS FROM THE FIELD

National Democratic Institute
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Chief Technology Officer
Recent Developments
Long Time Doing
Moments of Opportunity

A major event is approaching.
Plans have been made.
Partners are organized.
Technology is in place.
The world is watching.
It’s showtime.
The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs: NDI
Where NDI Works

[Map showing locations where NDI works around the world]
Some of NDI’s Funders
Happy Birthday to Us
Political Parties, Governance, Elections, Civic Groups, Women’s Participation
What I Am Going To Discuss

A Practitioner’s Perspective

• Think Strategically: A Rights-Based Approach
• Programming: Tech-Enabled, Not Tech-Driven
• Risky Business – Working in Closed Regimes
• Fragile Democracies, Big Opportunities
Rights-Based Approaches
What is a Rights Based Approach?

• Real goal: Change the playing field
• Increase political space -> peaceful political reform
• Plan long-term
• Prepare for moments of opportunity
Case Study: Opening Repressistan

1. Have relationships with activist partners
2. Partners have long-term strategy for change
3. Politically charged event is coming up – moment of opportunity approaches
Seize the Day, Seize the Data

Partner plan: document abuses around election

• Data collection & transfer
• Crunch the numbers
• Share
  – Transmit inside country
  – Share with world – while world is watching
Proper Preparation Prevents Poor Performance

*Long, long ago in a country far, far away...*

- Well before the moment, must cultivate the ground.
- Meet with activist groups, establish relationship
- Find out what goals, capacity and needs are
- Advise on what’s worked well in other places
Seizing the Data

• How to collect information?
  • Low-tech might be best solution.

• Is multimedia part of the equation?
  • 1 JPG = 1 kiloword

• How to move info internally?

A picture of 1,000 words
Analyze, Digest, Prepare

- Aggregate information
- Crunch the numbers
- Edit media content
Get the Word Out

• Holistic communications strategy
• Solid messaging around key findings
• Anchor content online
• Online/offline outreach
• Go where the audience is

In developing world is Twitter the answer?
Share the Data
...And Do It All Under Challenging Conditions.
Tech-Enabling Programs

The *Program* –

*Not The Technology* -

*Is The Driver*
Tech-Enabled: Good!

• Have clear strategy
• Use tech to make as a multiplier – increase impact
• Program will still work without the tech
  – What happens if the power is shut down?
Tech-Driven: Dangerous

• Have shiny new hammer

• Everything looks like a nail
Liberation Tools Are Not the Goal

- Have a role to play
- Trying to change the rules of the system
- Cat and Mouse games often do not end well for the mice

* Results May Not Be Representative
The Golden Triangle

Strong Organizations

Well planned actions

Good enabling technology
2008 Zimbabwe Elections

• ZESN – Zimbabwe Election Support Network

• MDC – Movement for Democratic Change
Program Planning when Security Counts
A Risky Business
Technical Sophistication Varies Among Regimes
Convenient Tech – Easy to Track

Cell Phone Triangulation
Café Surveillance in China
A CRYPTO NERD'S IMAGINATION:

His laptop's encrypted. Let's build a million-dollar cluster to crack it.

BLAST! Our evil plan is foiled!

WHAT WOULD ACTUALLY HAPPEN:

His laptop's encrypted. Drug him and hit him with this $5 wrench until he tells us the password.

GOT IT.
Surveillance Everywhere
Protecting Citizens
Fragile Democracies Need Love Too
... Not Doing Well

Population Breakdown by Regime Type: Non-Baltic Former Soviet Union

- Transitional/Hybrid: 18%
- Semi-Consolidated Authoritarian: 3%
- Consolidated Authoritarian: 79%

*Freedom House, Nations in Transit, 2010*
Afghan Election Data

AfghanistanElectionData.org
So Long, and Thanks for All the Fish
Don’t Forget to Write

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