

In 2005 the world's attention was focused upon democratic advances in the Middle East, as Iraqis and Afghans risked their lives to participate in democratic processes once thought unimaginable in their countries. But in every corner of the world there were remarkable individuals, their stories virtually unknown, who were also advancing the principles of freedom, democracy, and human rights.

Felix Sunday Khamis founded the Sudan Self-Help Foundation in 2002. With offices in Khartoum and Juba, the foundation works in poor and displaced persons communities, including Darfur. For the courses in its School of Democracy and Peace Building, the foundation brings together carefully selected community leaders from different ethnic groups drawn primarily from displaced person camps to receive practical training by qualified instructors on issues ranging from human rights and the Sudanese Constitution to conflict resolution and good governance. A remarkably high percentage of participants use the training to strengthen their organizations and to make them self-sustaining. For example, following a course in Abyei, trainees from rival ethnic groups formed a peace committee that is now working to solve problems in the area. In Sudan, Khamis points out, "the only way to bring sustainable peace, equitable development, and peaceful co-existence is through democracy."



During his 28-year career of community activism, Muhammed Ali Shah has organized the rural population of the coastal areas of Sindh, one of the poorest districts of Pakistan. In 1998, along with other representatives of the fisherfolk community, he launched the Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum to organize a grassroots campaign against harmful policies of the local government. The campaign has resulted in a number of notable successes, including the banning of the use of destructive nets endangering fish and other submarine species. The Forum supports the sustainable management of the fisheries and the protection of other rights through advocacy, participatory research, information dissemination, and community mobilization.

Nikolai and Tatiana Shchur established the Helping Hand Foundation in 1997 in the southern Urals region of Russia. During a period in which the forces of democracy in that country are very much on the

defensive, the Shchurs dream of educating a new generation of journalists, lawyers, teachers, prison wardens, and police with an understanding of the fundamentals of human rights. In addition to offering courses on a wide range of rights-related subjects, their foundation runs a “human rights ambulance” that provides legal aid in pretrial detention centers, operates free legal aid clinics, and assists the region’s nongovernmental organizations to get up and running while they seek outside resources.

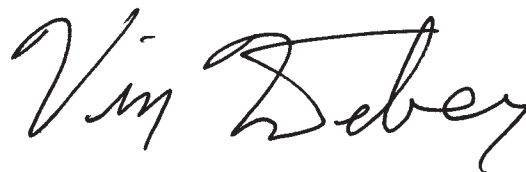
Today, thanks to the efforts of the Administration and the Congress, as well as a number of well-publicized democratic breakthroughs, democracy assistance is receiving more attention than at any time since the founding of the National Endowment for Democracy 22 years ago. But a few dramatic breakthroughs notwithstanding, democracy assistance continues to be a long-term proposition. The challenges of developing a democratic culture and creating institutions that will be truly lasting cannot be met in a brief period of time; nor can they be solved from the outside. Rather, they must be addressed by individuals working at the grassroots. Still, our support and encouragement continue to play an important role.

Through the activities supported by our affiliated Institutes, the American Center for International Labor Solidarity, the Center for International Private Enterprise, the International Republican Institute and the National Democratic Institute, and through the programs we fund in areas ranging from civic education, independent media and human rights to the rule of law and the participation of women and youth, NED’s grantees are building the institutions and spreading the values of democracy.

The report that follows offers summaries of the nearly one thousand programs the Endowment funded last year. The stories of Felix Khamis, Mohammed Ali Shah, and Nikolai and Tatiana Shchur may be unknown to Americans, but the work they carry out will ultimately have a profound impact on the societies in which they live. These, and the countless other heroes whose programs are described here, remind us that our work is, in the end, about people, extraordinary people who believe that lofty visions can be realized only if they are backed up by hard work.

In a lecture delivered last May at the Library of Congress, former Czech President Vaclav Havel pointed out that “Not only is it a moral responsibility, it is also in the vital interests of everyone who lives in democratic or free conditions not to be indifferent to the fate of people who do not enjoy the same good fortune, and to offer a wide spectrum of help to those who have the courage, even in unfree conditions, to behave freely and, under the rule of lies, to serve truth.”

From its inception, the National Endowment for Democracy and its affiliated institutes have operated according to this creed. With the continued support of the Administration and the Congress, which we deeply appreciate, we will strive to carry out our mandate by offering a wide spectrum of assistance to those who struggle for freedom and democracy.



Vin Weber  
*Chairman*