



Society for International Development
Washington Chapter



FY 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

Democracy, Rights, & Governance Workgroup

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DEMOCRACY, RIGHTS, & GOVERNANCE WORKGROUP

The SID-W Democracy, Rights, and Governance Workgroup is a group of individuals who are actively engaged in the ongoing evolution and development of human rights and democracy associated with international development, including the role of civil society. With events ranging from strengthening health governance to dealing with corruption, to advancing human rights and rule of law, and evolving political analysis, this workgroup aims to inform and educate its members on any and all development issues that relate to democracy, rights, and governance, as well as how civil society can help shape economic and social outcomes. The workgroup also works to examine principles important to democracy, human rights, and governance, including transparency, accountability, participation, and inclusion.



Dear Members of the Democracy, Rights, & Governance Workgroup,

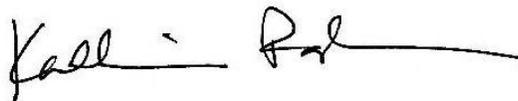
Our Fiscal Year 2020 was an unusual one for us, as it was for so many, ending during a global pandemic. This certainly affected our ability to deliver programming, but we were pleased to hold one excellent event: [Political Participation of Refugees - Do We Need a 'Reset' in Refugee Policies and Practices](#).

We are grateful to our former Co-Chairs Eric Bjornlund (Democracy International) and Ann Hudock (Counterpart International) who helped to create many important and compelling events for this workgroup over the past several years. We wish them the best moving forward and hope they stay engaged with the workgroup. And we welcome Barbara Smith (The Carter Center) as our new Co-Chair. We are excited to work with her over the next few years and look forward to the ideas she will bring to our workgroup's programming.

Now that we have mastered the art of virtual programming, we look forward to offering more events accessible to a wider audience and providing an even more dynamic community for interaction. We hope to see you at some of our upcoming events. You can see all of our programs on our [website](#) – and please check back often as we add new ones regularly.

Thank you for your continued interest in and support of SID-Washington's Workgroups. We hope to see you at future SID-Washington events! If you have any questions, comments or ideas, please feel free to send an email to events@sidw.org.

Best regards,



Katherine Raphaelson



Paul A. Sherman





**Barbara
Smith**

Vice President, Peace Programs,
The Carter Center

Barbara Smith oversees the Carter Center's democracy, human rights, conflict resolution, and rule of law programs, which operate projects and observe elections in countries across the globe.

Before coming to The Carter Center in September 2020, Smith was principal and founder of the international development consulting firm Mountain Time Development. She also was a senior associate at the Center for Strategic & International Studies, focused on the Human Rights Initiative, conducting field work and research on civil society. Her wide-ranging career also includes assignments at the United States Agency for International Development and with the National Security Council in the White House.

At USAID, Smith held a number of positions, most recently as deputy assistant to the administrator in the Bureau of Policy, Planning, and Learning. She also co-led the team that created the seminal USAID 2013 Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance Strategy, which is applied across the approximately 100 countries where USAID works. Other positions she held at USAID included senior policy analyst, deputy coordinator for Middle East Transition Response during the Arab Spring, and senior field advisor for democracy and governance.



**Eric
Bjornlund**

President,
Democracy International

Eric Bjornlund, Democracy International, is a lawyer and is co-founder and President of Democracy International. He is also Adjunct Professor in the Department of Government at Georgetown University, where he teaches in the graduate program in Democracy and Governance; serves as Secretary and Board Member of the Advancing Democratic Elections and Political Transitions (ADEPT) consortium; and by appointment of the Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development serves as a member of the Advisory Committee on Voluntary Foreign Assistance. At Democracy International, Mr. Bjornlund oversees a rapidly growing organization with more than 200 full-time, professional staff members.

Over the past 25-plus years, Mr. Bjornlund has designed, directed, evaluated, and provided training and technical assistance for international development programs in more than 70 countries. He has extensive experience and expertise across the full range of democracy, human rights and governance (DRG), conflict, and transition programs and is a recognized expert on international and domestic election monitoring. He also has extensive experience with evaluation methodology, analytical methods, and survey research, as well as with USAID processes and regulations.



Ann Hudock

President and CEO,
Counterpart International

Ann Hudock is President and CEO of Counterpart International. Bringing more than 25 years of international development experience, Dr. Hudock leads Counterpart's global program portfolio, building on the organization's body of work with new approaches to promote civic participation and government accountability.

Before joining Counterpart in 2017, Dr. Hudock worked at Plan International USA, where she led the expansion of the international program portfolio and served as Vice Chair of the Plan Federation Program Directors Forum. She was a Managing Director at DAI, diversifying their work beyond U.S. government funding and creating a strong portfolio with UK Department for International Development.

Before working with DAI, Dr. Hudock was the Deputy Country Representative and the Acting Country Representative for The Asia Foundation in Hanoi, Vietnam. Democracy and governance issues were the foundation of her career in her roles as head of Democracy and Governance at World Learning in Washington, DC; as one of the first Democracy Fellows at USAID in 1997; and as Special Assistant to the Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs, covering the Democracy, Human Rights and Labor portfolio.

Wednesday, September 19, 2019

9:30AM - 11:00 AM ET | SID-Washington

Political Participation of Refugees - Do We Need a 'Reset' in Refugee Policies and Practices?



Political Participation of Refugees - Do We Need a 'Reset' in Refugee Policies and Practices?

Moderator: **Ann Hudock**, President and CEO, Counterpart International

Speakers: **Armend Bekaj**, Senior Programme Officer for the Democracy Assessment and Political Analysis Unit, IDEA International

Joseph Sackor, Delegate for Pennsylvania & Chairman, Advocacy and Communication Committee, Refugee Congress

Mark Yarnell, Senior Advocate and UN Liaison, Refugees International

Event Description: With more than 25 million refugees worldwide in 2019, and their numbers rising at a much faster rate than we can develop durable solutions for them, it is critically important for policymakers and implementing organizations to address political participation of refugees. Insufficient involvement of refugees in political decision-making not only directly affects the refugees' social integration and security but also can contribute to political crisis in their home countries and/or lead to new instability in the host region. Further complicating the international response, both humanitarian and development organizations work on these issues, which in many cases makes common action more difficult. Can we see the intersection of humanitarian and development work as a space that offers opportunities for synergies and new ways of cooperation between the two sectors? What would a new approach on enhancing political participation of refugees look like? Could there be a common agenda for advocacy?

The SID-Washington Democracy, Rights, & Governance Workgroup organized this event to address these critically important but underappreciated issues. A representative of International IDEA shared the conclusions of their important report on Political Participation of Refugees, Bridging the Gaps (2018), and a diverse, highly experienced panel of experts addressed challenges, opportunities, and potential new approaches related to political participation of refugees. We aimed to facilitate an open discussion with attendees, looking for diverse experiences, potential solutions, and especially views on how we can collectively work to “reset” policy on political participation of refugees.

This event was part of SID-Washington's Series on Navigating the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus.

This event was followed by a lunch sponsored by Counterpart International.

Key Takeaways:

1) Political Participation of Refugees in Host Countries

Ann Hudock (Counterpart International) opened the panel discussion by asking **Dr. Armend Bekaj** (IDEA International) to share the main findings and key lessons in his co-authored IDEA study, “Political Participation of Refugees: Bridging the Gaps”. Dr. Bekaj introduced the background and methodology of this study as well as the three main aspects of political participation of refugees in host countries, which include: (1) citizenship and naturalization, (2) access to electoral rights and political parties, and (3) consultative bodies, civil society, and grassroots initiatives. Dr. Bekaj said when formal political participation is not possible, refugees may rely on less formal means of engagement such as joining grassroot movements. These forms of political participation do not replace formal political engagement, rather,

they are complementary or intermediary steps on the way to a durable solution such as naturalization or voluntary repatriation. **Joseph Sackor** (Refugee Congress) shared his personal experience for participating in the political process in the US as a refugee from Liberia. His story spoke to both formal and non-formal political engagement described in Dr. Bekaj's study, showing the difficult, yet meaningful steps that refugees take to gain access to political representation in their host countries.

2) Political Participation of Refugees in Countries of Origin

Dr. Bekaj noted that the political engagement of refugees in countries of origin has the potential to positively affect democracy-building efforts. However, diasporas can also negatively impact peace processes, particularly during periods of political transition. Two criteria – (1) out of country voting (OCV) and civil society and (2) protests and transnational political

activism – were used as measurements of formal political engagement of refugees. As for the non-formal political engagement, there are opportunities for mobilizing refugee diaspora beyond the borders of their host countries. Namely, refugees can help raise awareness on the political developments in origin countries in the international community.

3) Recommendations for Governments, Political Parties, NGOs, and Civil Societies

An important purpose of this study is to provide guidance and inform policymakers on how to increase the political engagement and participation of refugees in the future. Dr. Bekaj presented the following recommendations:

I. Governments in host countries: Dr. Bekaj emphasized the importance of implementing the commitment in Article 34 of the 1951 Refugee Convention on naturalization, easing the process for refugees by lowering requirements, with special attention to groups affected by double marginalization.

II. Political parties: The study recommends political parties in host countries develop strategies and platforms for engaging with refugee groups to promote social cohesion and diversity within the party.

III. International and regional organizations: These groups should use their infrastructure and capacity to organize and support the integrity of OCV processes.

IV. Lastly, diasporas organizations and civil society should consider the establishment of alternative platforms for dialogue and engagement in country-of-origin politics.

4) Looking Forward

After the presentation, Hudock asked the panelists to share their opinions on how to improve refugee integration and political participation in host countries. **Mark Yarnell** (Refugees International) highlighted exploring ways for refugees to engage in meaningful rather than token participation. Speaking from his personal experience, Sackor discussed the importance of bringing issues of refugees into the national discourse and encourage face-to-face contact between local citizens and refugee populations to promote social integration. Yarnell also pointed out that most modern refugee crises are no longer temporary issues. Once a crisis lasts more than 5 years, it is likely to last more than a decade. Traditional methods such as providing food, shelter, and emergency responses are no longer sufficient. The international community should shift its focus to finding long-term and more permanent solution that promotes integration in the host countries.





**Society for International Development
Washington Chapter**

1129 20th St. NW, Suite #500
Washington, DC 20036
+1-202-331-1317
events@sidw.org

@SIDWashington | #SIDWLive



SID-Washington Programming Staff

Katherine Raphaelson - President
kraphaelson@sidw.org

Paul A. Sherman - Director of Programs
psherman@sidw.org

FY 2020 Workgroup Co-Chairs

Barbara Smith - The Carter Center

Eric Bjornlund - Democracy International

Ann Hudock - Counterpart International

Photo Credit

Paul A. Sherman - Director of Programs

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