

**Periodic Report to National Endowment for Democracy
Financial and Program Activities for Grant #2002-362
Video and Media Training Workshop in Iran**

Effective Date of Grant: June 7, 2002
Reporting Period: July 1-December 31, 2002
January 1 - January 31, 2003
Total Grant: \$25,000

National Iranian American Council
www.niacouncil.org

January 31, 2003

The following report will describe and analyze developments pertaining to Grant #2002-362 from the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) to the National Iranian-American Council (NIAC) in the amount of \$25,000. The purpose of the grant is to facilitate a training workshop in Iran for Iranian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on how to produce educational video and media related material. The Grant became effective as of June 7, 2002. The current report will both cover the period from July 1 through December 31, 2002, and January 1 to 31, 2003. NIAC did not receive grant money from NED in the former period. However, NIAC was able to assess the feasibility of the project by working out details on how to carry out the project in Iran and establishing contacts with grassroots groups. The first portion of the grant in the amount of \$12,500 was received on December 31, 2003. NIAC activities picked up in January as a result of the grant. In this period, NIAC was able to firmly establish the strategy it would pursue to implement the project in Iran. The following report examines developments from 2002 and by extension through January 2003.

Background

Important political developments inside Iran have led NIAC to revise and re-adjust its activities with respect to the project. Since November 2002, there has been a major crackdown of free press in Iran. Several journalists have been arrested and not released to this day. In addition, three main newspapers, including the popular daily, Hamshahri, published by Tehran's municipality were shut down. Iran's radical judiciary closed down the Tehran City Council, an elected body, for challenging the central government's policy and various interest groups running the construction business in Tehran. At least one student activist in Tehran has been arrested for participating in pro-democracy demonstrations demanding the release of a reformist scholar, Hashem Aghajari, sentenced to death by the judiciary. Several other students were severely beaten or detained temporarily during these demonstrations. The reformist parliament continues to struggle with the authority of the radical camp that rules the judiciary and the army. Civil society groups such as NGOs remain under close government scrutiny. As a result, many NGOs are fearful to cooperate with groups outside Iran, particularly those based in the United States. Hostilities between Iran's central authorities and the U.S. government have not helped alleviate concerns inside Iran with respect to working with American NGOs.

Summary

In the context of the tense political situation inside Iran, NIAC has been relatively successful in implementing the first phase of the project. A summary of the results of NIAC's main activities for the period in question include:

1. ***Defining scope of activity:*** The project will focus exclusively on training civil society groups such as NGOs and in specific environmental NGOs. The focus on the environment is crucial because environmental groups pose the least challenge and danger to central authorities in Iran who are sensitive to political activities by civil society groups.

2. ***Establishing initial contacts with Iran:*** NIAC has met with officials from the Iranian Foreign Ministry. The meeting clarified official channels that NIAC should seek in order to receive permission to work with NGOs in Iran. In addition, NIAC has met with an umbrella NGO organization, Hamyaran Ghadah, in order to explore possibilities to partner with the group in implementing the project. A second NGO, Green Front Iran, was also approached for partnership purposes.
3. ***Drawing up program for the workshop:*** A three-day program for the workshop (Attachment 1) has been prepared. The program meets NIAC's requirements and expectations for the workshop.

The main challenges facing NIAC in the period in question involve:

1. ***Defining a strategy for implementing the project:*** NIAC has explored the option of working with three different strategies: a) receive authorization from the Iranian government to work with Iranian NGOs; b) work directly with Iranian NGOs; c) work with unregistered civil society groups.
2. ***Assessing potential need for discretion in disclosing source of project fund:*** The Iranian government and NGOs are cautious towards NED or any other U.S. based organization that may receive funds from the U.S. government. A main question for NIAC has and continues to be how to use discretion in revealing the source of funding for the project.

A detailed description of developments and an assessment of remaining challenges will follow in this report.

Project Activities

Following NED approval of NIAC's proposal in June 2002, NIAC was asked by NED to provide sufficient information that it would not violate the U.S. Sanctions Act against Iran. According to the Act, NIAC could not spend any part of the grant inside Iran unless for travel and accommodation purposes for project consultants based in the United States. NIAC was left with the task to find ways to implement the project with these restrictions. NIAC decided early on that it would partner with a local NGO in order to carry out the project. The Iranian partner is expected to provide free space for the duration of the workshop. Iranian participants to the workshop are also expected to cover their own costs of attending the workshop. Equipment and materials required to run the workshop will be purchased and produced in the U.S. in order to observe the sanctions.

In December 2002, NIAC's project manager, Ms. Banafsheh Keynoush, traveled to Iran to conduct an independent research on NGOs in Iran. After her return to the U.S., in light of the political upheavals inside Iran, Banafsheh decided to work solely with environmental NGOs. The reason for the decision was clear. There are three main NGO groups in Iran: women's, youth and environmental NGOs. Of the three, environmental

groups are considered the least political. In fact, many government authorities have realized that government alone cannot respond to the grave environmental hazards facing Iran. As a result, they support environmental activities by groups other than the government. In short, environmental partnership between Iranian NGOs and the government is encouraged. Working with environmental NGOs also does not necessarily preclude other NGO groups. Many environmental groups serve dual purposes, such as the Women's Society Against Environmental Pollution that deals with the role of women and the environment. Many environmental groups represent both environmental and youth groups, such as Supporters of Green Mind. Mindful of these nuances, NIAC has consciously decided to invite environmental groups as well as groups with dual purposes to participate at the workshop. The workshop is designed to include from these groups nine to twelve NGO representatives from the capital, Tehran, and several provinces.

While in Tehran, Banafsheh met with two important groups. The first was a meeting with Iran's Foreign Ministry official in charge of environmental activities, Mr. Tekieh Sadat. During the meeting, Mr. Sadat explained the official channel an outside NGO could use to work in Iran. In order to follow official channels, NIAC needs an invitation from a local NGO partner. The partner would send a request to the Foreign Ministry inviting NIAC, and explaining the purpose of NIAC's project. The Foreign Ministry will approve the invitation provided it is satisfied with the nature of the invitation including the project. It is the Foreign Ministry that issues visas for these outside groups. In NIAC's case, visas are not required since both Banafsheh and Dr. Hadi Ghaemi who are in charge of project implementation are Iranian nationals by origin.

Banafsheh's second meeting in Tehran was with an NGO called Hamyaran Ghadah (HG). HG is run by Mr. Baquer Namazi, and it is an umbrella NGO in charge of building coalitions among Iranian NGOs and capacity building for the NGO community. HG is one of the few Iranian NGOs with a track record of working with international groups such as the United Nations (UN), and the Population Council. Mr. Namazi said that he could partner with NIAC provided he agrees with our project. Banafsheh also had a telephone conversation with the Director of an environmental NGO, Green Front Iran (GFI), about partnership possibilities. Just last week, on January 25, 2003, GFI's director, Dr. Moatari, emailed Banafsheh to say that he could not accept partnership with NIAC at this stage. Dr. Moatari did not go into details about why he does not wish to partner with NIAC, but it suggested that he was concerned about how the Iranian government might view the partnership under the current tense political situation in Iran. His email is enclosed in Attachment 2.

As a result of difficult political circumstances in Iran, many Iranian groups and NGOs are hesitant to partner with U.S. based groups. In general, there is a degree of paranoia about the nature of U.S. based groups. The Iranian government is suspicious and creates fear among NGOs in their dealings with these groups. Revealing the source of funding for this project has therefore been a big question for NIAC. On the one hand, NIAC would like to operate in full transparency inside Iran. That is what the Iranian government also expects. On the other hand, NIAC's chances of implementing the project could be forestalled if NED is mentioned without discretion. According to some sources inside

Iran, the Iranian government could be sensitive to NED if it is perceived that NED receives funds from the U.S. government to pursue policies of the U.S. government in Iran.

NIAC believes that it is critical at this stage to use discretion whether in negotiating with the Iranian government or seeking NGO partners in Iran. NIAC proposes to adopt a “don’t ask, don’t tell” strategy, that is to say, if NGOs or the Iranian government do not ask about our source of funding, NIAC will not mention NED. If NIAC is asked to disclose the source of funding, it will do it with full discretion and mindful of the existing political nuances. It is crucial not to jeopardize NIAC’s future activities in Iran as well our Iranian NGO partners.

Given the abovementioned information, NIAC proposes three alternative strategies in order to implement the project:

1. ***Use official channels:*** NIAC would negotiate with relevant officials from the Iranian government in order to receive authorization to implement the project. This could take as long as three to four months. However, due to NIAC’s extensive contacts, it could take less time. With government approval, NIAC would partner with any NGO that it chooses and carry out the project.
2. ***Negotiate directly with NGOs:*** NIAC has an extensive list of NGOs that it could work with and invite to the workshop. The risk involved in bypassing the government and negotiating with NGOs directly is that either NGOs might be hesitant to take a risk for understandable reasons and refuse, or that they might accept not knowing either about NIAC or NED and risking getting into trouble later.
3. ***Negotiate with unregistered NGOs and activist groups:*** NIAC has been in contact with numerous activist and civil society groups that operate at an unofficial level, including many women’s and cultural groups. NIAC can hold a workshop for these groups in Tehran. Their only difference with other groups is that they are yet to be registered with the Iranian government.

Of the three options mentioned above, NIAC prefers to begin with the first option. The first option has the benefit that it would not place anyone, either NIAC or Iranian NGOs at risk. The downside is that it could take months to conclude negotiations with the government in Iran, but this certainly outweighs the risks of not contacting government at all. However, if NIAC feels that the official government channel does not lead to conclusive results, it will always keep open the remaining two options.

NIAC has the contacts required to carry out all three options. The following is a summary of contacts and course of action that NIAC would take for each option:

- **Using official channels:** NIAC will contact the Iranian Interest Section in Washington DC. NIAC already has good contacts with the head of the interest section, Mr. Jazini and his assistant, Dr. Mehrabadi. The purpose is to get their feedback on the best course of action to take. NIAC will then contact

Mr. Sadat at the Iranian Foreign Ministry and send a fax through him to the head of the Department for International and Economic Affairs at the Ministry. The department is in charge of regulating contacts between Iranian NGOs and their counterparts abroad. NIAC also knows the Iranian Ambassador to the United Nations, Dr. Javad Zarif due to personal contacts between Dr. Zarif and NIAC's Acting President, Trita Parsi, and Banafsheh Keynoush. Banafsheh and Hadi also met with Ambassador Zarif in New York on January 24, 2003 at a reception organized to explore ways of working with NGOs in Iran. The meeting was very positive and Ambassador Zarif mentioned Iran's interest in working with outside groups but cautioned that Iran's political circumstances must be considered in all such activities.

- **Negotiating directly with NGOs:** Banafsheh had worked with Iranian NGOs for eight years when she lived in Iran. Later, she returned to Iran to conduct research on NGOs. As a result, she is very well connected in the Iranian NGO community. Therefore, NIAC is in a position to establish contacts directly with Iranian NGOs both for the purpose of partnership as well as to invite NGO representatives to participate at the workshop. (A list of some of the NGOs NIAC wishes to work with is included in Attachment 3).
- **Negotiating with unofficial or semi-official NGO and activist groups:** Banafsheh and Hadi have met with numerous unregistered Iranian civic groups during their regular trips to Iran who are eager to work with NIAC. These unregistered groups generally operate in the privacy of their homes.

Given the realm of options and possibilities, it is NIAC's assessment that the project can be carried out successfully in Iran. NIAC proposes to re-package the workshop slightly in order to ensure that it meets the strict requirements that Iranian officials expect and to ensure that it would meet the least amount of opposition inside Iran. For example, Iranian officials will be very welcoming of environmental educational packages. Therefore, NIAC will consider presenting the workshop as an environmental educational workshop for NGOs.

Finances

In the period of June-December 2002, NIAC did not receive any funds from NED. The activities explained were carried out in order to assess the potential for implementing the project inside Iran. NIAC received the amount of \$12,500 from NED on December 31, 2002. A small portion of that was used to reimburse consulting fees from the past (\$1,000). Also, consulting fees were paid to Banafsheh Keynoush (\$800), Hadi Ghaemi (\$800) and Trita Parsi (\$300), based on their work in the month of January. The payments are distributed over a period of six months until the end of June 2003, when the workshop is expected to take place. Other expenses such as supplies, and communication expenses are covered on a case-by-case basis with receipts for those expenses (communications, \$89.15, fax machine \$195.29). Camera equipment will not be purchased and materials for the workshop will not be produced until implementation details are worked out. In total, \$3,184.44 of the project funds have been spent. No non-endowment funds for this project have been received. The Financial Report is found in Attachment 4.

ATTACHEMENT 1

Program for “Video-Documentary Making” Workshop for NGOs

DAY 1:

Morning Session (8 am –12 pm)

- Video Documentary as a tool for communicating your message and for outreach:
 - Importance of public awareness of your mission
 - Building organic links with your community
 - Public advocacy of specific issues
 - Reaching out and educating government officials

- How to plan for making a video documentary:
 - As a device for introducing your organization
 - As a public relations campaign for a specific cause
 - As an educational resource

- Developing the concept for a documentary:
 - Identifying your target audience
 - Focusing on your primary issues
 - Articulating the importance and relevance of your product
 - Deciding on a methodology and framework

- Initial Preparations :
 - Preliminary research on your topic
 - Developing a plan of action:
 - Choosing location(s)
 - Identifying interviewees and making initial contacts
 - Identifying the multiple dimensions of your topic
 - Preparing a written statement that summarizes your objectives and describes the final product
 - Matching your technical and financial resources with your product
 - Acquiring permits where necessary
 - Identifying possible distribution channels

Afternoon Session (1 pm – 5 pm)

- How to compose a video documentary:
 - The importance of visual and dramatic effects
 - Introducing your topic
 - Providing background
 - Providing context and relationship to the larger society
 - Using objective language and expert opinion
 - Focusing on specific stories or individuals
 - Keeping your audience's attention

- What is needed to make a digital video:
 - Digital cameras and accessories
 - Editing tools
 - Various media for reproduction and distribution

- What are the roles of the:
 - Director
 - Camera person
 - Editor
 - Producer
 - Light and Sound crew

DAY 2

Morning Session (8 am –12 pm)

- How to make a digital video

- Introduction to digital cameras:
 - What's the difference between digital and analog cameras
 - How to choose a digital camera
 - Basic principals of operation

- Important factors when shooting a video:
 - Hand-held vs. tripod
 - Lighting conditions

- Various lighting devices and techniques
- Sound recording
 - On-camera and detached microphones
 - Wireless microphones
- Optical vs. Digital zoom
- White Balance
- Using multiple cameras

Afternoon Session (1 pm – 5 pm)

- Hands-on training using digital cameras to become familiar with topics and techniques covered during the morning session. Participants will form teams of 2-3 persons and learn how to shoot videos. As a sample output, each team will produce a 10 minute segment including an interview with one of the team members.

DAY 3

Morning Session (8 am –12 pm)

- Editing your video:
 - Using a computer to edit digital video
 - Various software options
 - Storage issues
- Using editing software:
 - Transferring footage from your camera to the computer
 - Basic editing tools
 - Adding sound and music
- Creating an output
 - Various digital formats
 - Transferring your video to external media
 - Reproduction & distribution options

Afternoon Session (1 pm –5 pm)

- Hands-on training on editing techniques covered in the morning session. Each team will use provided editing software to input, edit, and output the footage that

was shot the previous afternoon. At the conclusion of the workshop, each team's output will be viewed by participants and discussed.

ATTACHEMENT 2

----- Original Message -----

From: Director of GFI

Sent: Saturday, January 25, 2003 8:41 AM

To: bkeynoush@hotmail.com

Cc: magazine@greenfront.org

Subject: RE: Video Project in Iran

Dear Ms Keynoush

Salam

According to your email about the suggested workshop in Iran and after consulting about this issue with GFI Managing board, despite the great opportunity that it would be , Unfortunately GFI won't be able to work as a co-operator .

As you may guess the reason is the current diplomatic problems between US and Iran and the sensitive roles that NGOs have in this between.

However we believe that it may be a possibility to handle it in a more formal way.

It means that if you wish we can give you the contact information of some governmental bodies.

Cultural Ministry of I.R.I and /or Department of Environment, the Education Section , That seems to be able to cooperate with this workshop.

I am sorry with this matter

Best regards
Syamak m moattari

----- Original Message -----

From: Director of GFI

Sent: Sunday, January 12, 2003 7:45 AM

To: bkeynoush@hotmail.com

Subject: RE: Video Project in Iran

Dear Ms Keynoush

Thank you very much for interesting suggestion.
I hope we do it both together, (GFI & NIAC}

I has sent it to our managing board, you know we make our decision in participatory method, so it needs to atleast one week for decision making.

Please say my hello to all Iranian activitis in your organization.

Regards
Syamak M Moattari

----- Original Message -----

From: bkeynoush@hotmail.com
To: director@greenfront.org
Subject: RE: Video Project in Iran
Date: Fri, 10 Jan 2003 11:28:24 -0800

>Dear Dr. Moatari,
>
>I hope this email finds you well.
>
>It was so nice to talk to you in Iran. As you are aware, I represent and
>organization based in the United States named the National Iranian
>American Council (NIAC). NIAC is a one year old non-profit,
>non-political group of young Iranian Americans who wish to promote
>Iranian participation in American civil society and help Iranian
>Americans bridge gaps between Iran and the US.
>
>I am in charge of a NIAC media/video project. We will carry out this
>project in Iran. I am very interested in partnering with you and
>your organization, Green Front, for this project. I know that this
>is a decision that you will need time to make with your board. But
>allow me to offer you relevant information that could help you with
>the decision:
>
>The project aims to train a number of NGO environmental activists in
>Iran to learn the basics about making video or documentary films

>about causes that are important to them. This will be done by
>holding a three day workshop in Tehran. I and a colleague, Dr. Hadi
>Ghaemi, will travel to Iran to carry out the workshop. We intend to
>have the workshop sometime after April 2003 but before the end of
>summer (preferably sooner than later). We could work with you on the
>timing of the project.

>

>To make the project happen, there are a number of things we would
>need from our partner. The most important one is a room where we can
>hold the workshop full time for three days. We expect to have
>between 9-12 participants. If you decide to partner with us, we can
>work with you on the number of people to have. I would also like to
>explore with you ideas about who to invite to the workshop from among
>Tehran based and provincial environmental groups. We will be looking
>for groups that are active in their areas and could use the skills
>that our workshop offers to further their environmental goals. We
>will bring with us all the necessary equipment and materials, but
>will need a TV in Tehran.

>

>There are two important things that you should be aware of. As you
>know, there are strict rules in the United States about using money
>in Iran. Due to the sanctions, we cannot use any of the project
>money inside Iran. I would like to speak with you to explore ways of
>working with you despite this restriction. A second issue is with
>regards to whether or not you think we need to receive an
>authorization from the Iranian Foreign Ministry for this workshop.
>I'm not sure that it is absolutely necessary because it is a very
>small workshop, but I will follow your judgment in this respect. For
>your information, we received very limited funds for this project
>from a foundation in the United States called the National Endowment
>for Democracy (NED). I will be happy to call you in Tehran to
>discuss these issues in further detail if you can tell me when you
>are available.

>

>We will be very happy if Green Front decides to partner with NIAC for
>this project. I think the partnership will help us coordinate the
>work in Iran much better. It is also very important to us to work
>with a lead environmental group such as GF. For GF, the partnership
>will bring a new project in the environmental field to work on and
>host. I will work with you in every step to make sure that we
>succeed.

>

>If you have any questions please do not hesitate to email me at any
>time. As I said, I will also be happy to call you to discuss some of
>the issues in more detail if you are interested in working with me.

>

>I look forward to hearing from you very soon.

>

>My very best regards, Banafsheh Keynoush.

ATTACHEMENT 3

Tentative list of Iranian NGOs NIAC will consider working with either as partner or as invitees to the workshop:

1. Green Front Iran (GFI), Dr. Moatari, Tehran Province
2. Green Front Iran, Ms. Moadel, Mazandaran Province
3. Green Front Iran, Mr. Sharifmousavi, Gorgan Province
4. Hamyaran Ghadah (HG), Mr. Namazi, Tehran Province
5. Association of Caspian Experts, Mr. Afshin Aboutalebi, Mazandaran Province
6. Society of Green Defence, Mr. Ahmadi, Tehran Province
7. Green Group Masal, Mr. Ahmadi, Gilan Province
8. Caspian Green Network, Mr. Alimi, Golestan Province
9. Society of Iranian Environmentalists, Mr. Bahrampour, Tehran Province
10. Women's Society Against Environmental Pollution, Ms. Parsi, Gilan Province
11. Women's Society Against Environmental Pollution, Ms. Moradi, Mazandaran Province
12. Farhangsarai Sabz, Mr. Javaheri, Tehran Province
13. Boomiran, Ms. Mostofi, Tehran Province
14. CENESTA, Mr. Farvar, Tehran Province
15. Supporters of Green Mind, Ms. Mahsa, Tehran Province
16. Green Ava, Mr. Heidarzadeh, Tehran Province
17. Nature Friendship Association, Ms. Shafagnejad, Azerbaijan Province
18. Green Relief Association, Mr. Shahi, Kerman Province
19. Women's Society for the Environment, Ms. Ahmadi, Lorestan Province
20. Green Peace Iran, Mr. Jabarzadeh, Gilan Province
21. Society for Protection of Mountain Ecology, Mr. Ashtari, Tehran Province
22. Society of Nature Protectors, Mr. Parsa, Golestan Province
23. Fars Province Nature Protector's Society, Mr. Kamali, Fars Province
24. Women's and Sustainable Development Association, Ms. Farsi, Tehran Province
25. Green Earth Society, Mr. Miri, Khorasan Province
26. Women's Cultural and Environmental Association, Ms. Kasiri, Sistan and Baluchistan Province
27. People's Association for Environmental Conservation, Ms. Karimi, Yazd Province
28. Green Researchers, Mr. Pahlavan, Fars Province
29. Green Artists Association, Mr. Soltani, Kerman Province
30. Green Group, Mr. Parsavand, Ardebil Province

ATTACHEMENT 4
Financial Report

FORM: APFR102

FINANCIAL REPORT

NED Grant No. 2003-014.0

GRANTEE: The National Iranian American Council

PERIOD REPORT COVERS: June 2002 - January 31, 2003
 (insert beginning and ending dates of reporting period)

CONVERSION INFORMATION: (MUST be completed if applicable)

For the Grantee:

"Expenditures This Period" incurred in currency other than US dollars were converted to US dollars for purposes of this report at the rate of _____ = US\$1.00

<u>LINE ITEM</u>	<u>BUDGET</u>	<u>PRIOR EXPENDITURES*</u>	<u>EXPENDITURES THIS PERIOD</u>	<u>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</u>
Salaries	\$5,800			
Space and Utilities	500			
Supplies and Equipment	3,060		195.29	195.29
Communications and Postage	780		89.15	89.15
Travel and Per Diem	5,160			
Contractual Services	8,100	1000	1900.00	2900.00
Other Direct Costs	<u>1,600</u>			
TOTAL PROGRAM COSTS	\$25,000	\$1,000	2184.44	3184.44
TOTAL ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS				
GRAND TOTAL	<u>\$25,000</u>	<u>\$1,000</u>	<u>2184.44</u>	<u>3184.44</u>
			check sum	3,184

* "Prior Expenditures on all reports after the initial Financial Report should be the same as the "Total Expenditures" on the previous report. Any variations must be annotated and explained.