

**A F R I C A N**  
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**A D M I N I S T R A T O R S**  
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**V I C T O R I A F A L L S , Z I M B A B W E**

**N O V E M B E R 1 9 9 4**

**AFRICAN ELECTION  
ADMINISTRATORS COLLOQUIUM**

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15 - 18 November 1994

Victoria Falls, ZIMBABWE

**Report On The Proceedings**

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# FOREWARD

Since 1990 more African voters have been to the polls than at any other time since independence. Many countries in the region have held competitive, multi-party elections for the first time. Within this context and following the first round of transitional elections, the African Election Administration Colloquium offered an opportunity for election practitioners from throughout sub-Saharan Africa to:

- review common challenges to the organization and execution of transparent elections;
- discuss the specific roles and responsibilities of election administrators in order to further develop African electoral expertise and technically effective administrative systems;
- exchange experience and disseminate lessons learned from recent African elections, including practical strategies for institutionalizing election procedures that have proven successful;
- foster a mutually supportive network and explore the feasibility of establishing an inter-African Association of Election Administrators.

The colloquium emphasized the importance of building self-reliant African electoral institutions and provided a forum for participants to share their insights and discuss the challenges of building sustainable electoral systems and processes in their respective countries.

In his opening address The Honorable Andre Milongo, President of the Congo's National Assembly and formerly transitional Prime Minister, urged participants to use the colloquium to look for solutions they could adopt in order to have free and fair elections in their countries. He observed that while it might take considerable time before many African countries were in a position to have free and transparent elections, such elections were a vital "key to truly democratic societies with choice". He also emphasized the important roles for civic and voter education since "without democrats we will not have democracy".

Together with the other sponsoring organizations — The African American Institute (AAI), the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) and the United Nations Department for Development Support and Management Systems (UN-DDSMS) — we extend our gratitude to the participants themselves whose contributions and insights were the basis of the colloquium's success. This report attempts to capture the rich dialogue and exchange of ideas that characterized the proceedings.

Horacio Boneo  
Director  
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# **Section I**

## **Introduction and Overview**

# INTRODUCTION

*This introduction was prepared by Keith Klein, Director of Programs, Africa and the Near East, International Foundation for Electoral Systems, on behalf of the sponsoring organizations.*

**M**ore than 100 participants including representatives from 33 African nations attended the African Election Administrator's Colloquium in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe on November 15-18, 1994. For three and a half days, the participants discussed the success stories, the failures, the challenges and the promises of organizing, monitoring and participating in elections in Africa, past and future.

The colloquium in Zimbabwe was an unprecedented gathering of expertise on African elections. Late 1994 turned out to be an auspicious vantage point from which to assess the gains and the setbacks in electoral administration in African and to look toward the future as many countries began to prepare for "second generation" multiparty elections. As electoral commissioners, ministry officials, leaders of election monitoring groups, or electoral candidates, colloquium participants gained that expertise "in the trenches", in the ongoing effort to make multi-party elections a regular, peaceful and credible part of democratic governance in many African countries. The colloquium, by concentrating that expertise in one place for several days, allowed experts from countries at different stages in the process of democratization to share lessons learned from diverse experiences. The colloquium also sought to strengthen elections in Africa's democratic processes and to support and strengthen electoral administration as a profession.

Election administrators stand perhaps in the same relationship to the electoral process as elections themselves do to the democratic process. They are crucially important, yet at the same time they are not the full story. Democracy without periodic elections is untenable, but elections alone do not create democracy. Elections are a high point, but not an end point, for democracy. Elections must have election administrators, but administrators alone cannot create good elections. Even the best administrators and the most efficient electoral administration are at the mercy of political leadership and political culture. But just as a bad election can doom an infant democracy, election administrators without adequate resources, skills and integrity can doom an election.

Holding elections is a central responsibility of any democratic government, but election administration is often relegated to an ad hoc, underfunded and poorly staffed operation. It is an unheralded activity, yet it is vast, complex and expensive. Sometimes the quality of election administration can make the difference between a healthy democracy and a disintegrating one. The African Election Administrator's Colloquium was held with an awareness of these problems.

The principal assumptions on which the colloquium's agenda was based were that the accumulated African expertise in election administration needed to be shared across national, regional, and linguistic boundaries; that there were skills and technologies developed outside of Africa that could be usefully applied to future elections on the continent; and that the long-term strengthening of African election processes must be supported by intra-African information exchange and association.

On the basis of those assumptions, the colloquium's program combined presentations by the sponsoring organizations and international specialists with opportunities for African participants to share lessons learned with their colleagues. The colloquium's plenary and workshop sessions covered a wide range of election issues in a variety of formats. The colloquium provided the opportunity for the acquisition of new knowledge and skills to be applied by the participants to future elections where they work. This report and the papers presented in Victoria Falls are other outputs resulting from the colloquium. An additional result of the colloquium has been the creation of a working group to explore the feasibility and the means of establishing an association of African election authorities.

### **The Participants**

Representatives were invited to participate in the colloquium from all sub-Saharan African countries where multiparty elections had been held or were scheduled soon to be held. In most cases, one or two individuals from each country's electoral commission or election administering ministry were invited. Approximately two-thirds of the participants were election administrators. In order to broaden the scope of the discussion at the colloquium and to mirror the interaction of various groups in the electoral process, one or two representatives of civil society were invited from each country. Most often, these were leaders of civic organizations active in election monitoring, civic education or human rights. Political party leaders from several countries were also invited.

The mix of participants resulted in a fertile exchange transcending national, linguistic and professional boundaries. The strengths and weaknesses of electoral systems influenced by one tradition were brought into sharper relief when contrasted with electoral systems largely shaped by the traditions of others. In the course of the colloquium's proceedings, the challenges and constraints faced by election administrators began to be better understood by civic association leaders, while election administrators were able to deepen their appreciation for contributions of citizen organizations to the electoral process. When the problems of one country were examined in light of solutions found in other countries, new possibilities for improvement were acknowledged and general standards and expectations for fair and well-run elections were raised.

### **Themes for Reflection**

These fruitful discussions were initiated by plenary and workshop presentations made by the sponsoring organizations, other international election specialists and by the African participants. There were no official statements or conclusions at the end of the conference, but a number of themes were raised during the three



*L-R, Andre Milongo (Congo) and*

*Horacio Boneo (UN)*



days which merit further attention. They include:

- A key to effective election administration is long-range planning rather than crisis management. This conclusion argues for the establishment of permanent electoral structures that can continue strategic electoral planning and activities between elections.
- Electoral commissions and election administering ministries need to strive for openness and transparency in their operations. Actively reaching out to political parties and NGOs increases the effectiveness and the democratic nature of election administration.
- Organizing credible and periodic elections will continue to require some degree of dependence by many African countries on international assistance in the short run, but both African countries and their bilateral and multilateral partners should search for ways of reducing and eliminating that dependence.
- Domestic non-partisan NGOs have a legitimate and useful role to play in civic education and election monitoring.
- Technology, including an increased use of computers, has the potential to make election administration more efficient and economical in certain areas such as voter registries. Computerization, however, must be planned carefully, with an eye on short term costs and efficiency gains and on long term resource requirements for maintenance and upgrading.
- The hallmark of good election administration is its neutrality and integrity. Election administrators are important guardians of the public trust and of the democratic system.
- Governments and election administrators should move toward a professionalization rather than a politicization of election administration. One way to do that is through the creation of permanent and independent electoral commissions, with a membership of individuals of high integrity and with a professional staff.
- The colloquium was a useful catalyst for improved intra-African cooperation and communication in electoral matters. The interaction of African election administrators should go beyond the three and a half days in Victoria Falls and extend to an on-going association.

If election administrators are essential but partial components of good elections, and if elections are essential but partial components of democracy, it can also be said that international partners have often been important but partial components in African elections in the past few years. In many elections, international assistance has been indispensable – elections could not have taken place without donor support. But no matter what the size of international support might have been, nowhere has donor assistance alone been responsible for the success or failure of an electoral event. Much more important than external assistance are internal forces. At the beginning of the day and at the end of the day, credible, legitimate and fair elections are dependent only on a country's people and most importantly on its leaders.



*L-R, Tessy Bakary (Côte d'Ivoire) and*

*Stoney Cooks (AAI)*

In the short run, external actors may need to continue to play their indispensable but marginal role in African elections. Discussion at the colloquium in Zimbabwe focussed on the temporary nature of this assistance. African countries, particularly their election administrators, and international partners must work together to reduce and eventually eliminate the current state of dependence. Both the sponsors and the participants hope that the African Election Administrator's Colloquium has been able to make a significant and lasting contribution toward that goal.

## OVERVIEW OF THE DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESS

*Keynote address by Dr. James Jonah, Chairman of Sierra Leone's Interim Electoral Commission and former United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs*

Establishing the right to vote in and of itself should not be seen as a definitive determination that democracy has taken root in Africa. Even the South African situation, where a majority, denied the right to vote for so long, turned out in great numbers for the new experience, merits careful examination. Many people in Sierra Leone, he noted, are currently very nervous about holding another election.

Organizing, planning and financing are key tools in determining the freedom and fairness of elections. Cost is the major factor. Mozambique, whose Electoral Commission cost about \$60 million, might not have had successful elections without international donor support to the tune of \$55 million plus. Logistics also play a vital role. South Africa was forced to mount an expensive, logistical exercise to get ballot papers and boxes to Natal at the last minute. How much more difficult and expensive must it be for very poor countries with weak transport and communications networks to guarantee good electoral planning and logistics?

### **Transitions in governance**

Shifts in systems of governance bring their own set of problems. The move from a colonial to an independent system presents a different set of electoral problems than those associated with the shift from an authoritarian regime or a one-party system to a multi-party system. Perhaps the most difficult transition is the one unfolding in Sierra Leone — the shift from a military regime to a multi-party system.

Sierra Leone's Election Commission felt the circumstances warranted international involvement from an early stage, to ensure at least that the election timetable set by the military regime would be followed. Now, with almost a year and a half to go, the United Nations and the Commonwealth are engaged in helping the electoral process. This, despite the fact that governments tend to prefer that the UN becomes involved at a later stage.

### **Strengthening the democratic process**

Building democracy in Africa also requires developing tolerance and the concept of periodic accountability. Just as the people have to be allowed to judge the performance of government, so the idea of accepting the judgement of the people through the acceptance of election results needs to spread further.

The fact that there are not many democrats in Africa as yet should not be allowed to stop multi-party elections. Civic education may not create democrats the first time round, but it does make it more likely that elections will be easier to conduct second time around. The political parties also have an important contribution to make to the evolving democratization process. A belief in democracy requires a belief in free choice and free assembly.

The international community should help create and finance democratic institutions, especially where liberation movements are in the process of making the



*L-R, James Jonah (Sierra Leone) and  
Abderhamane Niang (Mali)*

transition to democracy. Funding can be made available through United Nations trust fund mechanisms. True, there is a danger that political parties can manipulate these funds, as happened in Mozambique, something the international community would be wary of in the future. The political parties are so essential to the overall process that the issue of public financing of campaigns will have to be addressed in building African democracies.

### **Inclusiveness**

In order for there to be stability in building young democracies in Africa there must be full participation and broadly-based acceptance of the results by all the people. Yet, governments or parties, asked to accept the principle of coalition even before they enter elections, quite properly respond: "Why do you want us to agree to form a coalition government before we know the people's choice?"

South Africa's political leaders opted for a five-year interim government, giving all the people a stake in government. This was clearly understood before the elections and it produced a relatively stable government.

Proportional representation (PR) is an option for all that at least guarantees a basis of stability. In Namibia, PR produced a balanced outcome, and the same appears to be true in terms of Mozambique's provinces and legislature. However, any move toward proportional representation requires extensive public debate and civic education since people are not used to the system. It is also a given that PR requires the existence of strong political parties to ensure all-round representativeness.

### **The security issue**

Free and fair elections cannot prevail in situations where security conditions make it impossible to guarantee that everyone can exercise their vote. Circumstances can also arise where those opposed to elections attempt to manipulate or exploit a security situation to prevent elections taking place. This should not be allowed.

The United Nations Security Council went ahead with the Cambodian elections despite the threats to the process being posed by the Khmer Rouge. Similarly, diplomacy and common sense prevailed in South Africa when fears of violence threatened a postponement of the elections there.

The fact is that without ongoing international involvement and support, the building of African democracy could die a natural death. This is why organizations such as the colloquium's sponsors should remain engaged in the democratization process in Africa.

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## KEYNOTE RESPONSE - I

*Response by Professor Joel Barkan, University of Iowa and former USAID Regional Democracy and Governance Advisor for East and Southern Africa. Dr. Barkan gave a summary of his paper "African Elections in Comparative Perspective."*

Internal demand for political renewal by Africans and a changing global context have led to multi-party competitive elections in nearly three dozen African countries since October 1990. This upsurge is part of a global process in which more than 60 countries have made or have begun the transition from an authoritarian to a democratic role since 1972.

Two factors are key in the transition to democracy in Africa and the institutionalization of competitive electoral practice: a consensus among elites that free and fair elections and other attributes of democracy are essential for renewing and maintaining the political health of a country; and, widespread public support and participation in the holding of elections.

Both conditions are essential for the institutionalization of democratic electoral practice in Africa. One without the other is insufficient. Without both, the transition to democracy will never be completed. As a gathering of election administrators and members of NGOs concerned with the holding of elections, the colloquium is mainly addressed to achieving and implementing the first condition.

Failure to overcome the technical and administrative problems inherent to the holding of democratic elections could lead to conflict between competing elites. Without the support of that elite consensus, the transition to democracy could break down.

Often lost sight of, however, is what is on the minds of the millions of ordinary citizens who comprise the electorate. Without the support of the electorate in terms of high rates of participation and turnout, the efforts of those responsible for organizing the elections would fail.

African governments and the elites who ran them during the first three decades of independence failed to appreciate the rationality of the typical inhabitant of the rural areas. Because these people are often uneducated and live out their lives in mostly rural communities, it was often assumed that they must be told what to do.

Yet in country after country it is clear that most citizens are quite capable of defining their self-interests and acting accordingly whether by selling their commodities on the informal market when official prices are artificially low, withdrawing from cooperation with the state when unfairly taxed or refusing to vote in meaningless or rigged elections.

Most voters are not concerned with issues of national policy or ideology. Their interests lie in which candidate or party or what likely government can deliver the goods in respect of schools, health clinics, water, roads, etc., to their home areas.

This can draw voters to support political parties with a regional or ethnic basis. This is why voters have no long-term loyalty to a single political party or individual and why they often desert incumbents given the chance. Even under the prevailing one-party format in Kenya during the 1970s, two-thirds of the incumbents were regularly turned out at the subsequent election.

The electoral process must be widely accessible to all citizens irrespective of where they live. The administrative apparatus should reach down into the local community. It should also be open to all in terms of universal registration, accessible polling stations etc. It should see to it that all regions are on a par organizationally. Subject to minimal rules, campaigning should be free and open. Candidates should have access to all regions. There should be no "no-go" zones. Voters should feel secure when they go to the polls, reassured perhaps by the presence of domestic monitors.

After the elections, efforts should be made to involve voters from all regions in the final organization of the government.

On this issue of power-sharing, a word of caution about proportional representation which in certain circumstances can strain voter confidence in the democratic process.

While the PR system lends itself to transitional elections, it poses long-term problems of accountability in societies that are fundamentally rural. Those elected by a party list system to serve in a national legislature without responsibility for specific geographic areas risk losing contact with the very people who elected them. A mix of PR and single-member districts such as exists in Namibia could ensure power-sharing while maintaining the direct connection with the rural areas.

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## **KEYNOTE RESPONSE - II**

*Response by Professor Guy Martin, Associate Professor, Political Science Department, Clark Atlanta University, and Carter Center African Governance Program associate. Dr. Martin gave a summary of his paper "Democratization and Governance in Africa."*

Progress in Africa's transition towards democracy has been slow and difficult. Transition processes vary from country to country depending on the historical and cultural conditions, the nature or combination of the specific social political forces, and the external inducements offered based on progress towards democracy. The achievements of the democratic revolution are very fragile and need to be strengthened and consolidated. A multi-party system is not sufficient in and of itself to constitute the conditions for a democracy.

### **A typology of democratic transition**

A typology of democratic transition in Africa covers four distinct groups of countries. First are the countries with established democratic traditions dating from the early 1970s — Botswana, The Gambia, Mauritius, Senegal. Even these countries are not immune from manipulations by the parties in power (Senegal) or to setbacks (The Gambia).

Second are the francophone Africa countries where transition has been cat-

alyzed by means of a national sovereign conference. The people, investing themselves with popular sovereignty as it were, create new institutions not only for the transition phase but, looking ahead, even set about drafting new constitutions.

Next are countries where the democratic transition has been "arrested" or confiscated by a military or civilian authoritarian government. In these instances, anticipating the wind of change, the government quickly organizes elections and by manipulating the political/electoral process is able to vote itself back into power. Examples include Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Guinea, Ethiopia, Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Djibouti and Nigeria.

Last are the countries where the transition is subject to total authoritarian reaction. In these instances, having seemingly conceded to the democratic demands of the people, military leaders first refuse to give up power and then stage a come-back through fraud and manipulation and whatever else is deemed necessary to either reinstate or maintain themselves in power. Togo and Zaire fall into this category.

Nevertheless, despite failures such as Cameroon, Kenya, Togo and Zaire, the "democratic revolution" has scored some notable achievements. There have been the relative successes in Benin, Cape Verde, Congo, Madagascar, Mali, Niger, Central African Republic, South Africa, and Zambia. Significantly, the defense and promotion of human rights is everywhere accepted as a given. The civil society is becoming stronger and basic institutions are being created.



*A Plenary in Session*

### **Obstacles and problems**

Obstacles and problems to democratic transition start with the institutional weaknesses of the new political parties. Their weakness is structural and they lack orientation, focus or ideology. Often, they are based on individuals or groups rather than a clear program. This makes them prey to clientelism and at risk of becoming ethnicized.

Moreover, the democratic momentum requires popular participation yet the process has been frequently hijacked by groups of elite. Rural or urban masses do not appear to be engaged in the process.

Then, African countries are asked to democratize in a context of increased economic and financial scarcity. The situation is made even more difficult by IMF/World Bank structural adjustment programs. In addition, there is now a new political conditionality with many donors requiring that the democratization process be initiated as a prerequisite for aid.

Finally, there are structural/institutional weaknesses inherent to most existing political systems. The separation of power is not really ingrained. Rather, a confusion of power reigns between executive, legislative and judicial branches of government. There is need for independent institutions to effectively control the political, financial and economic management of a country and to avoid corruption. The absence of a democratic culture is a serious problem both at the level of the government leaders, where the sense of State accountability is lacking, and at the level of the mostly uneducated and illiterate popular masses.

**Some possible solutions**

Possible solutions include constitutional and institutional changes to guarantee the separation of powers, a limit to the terms of incumbent presidents, and individual freedoms with specific empowerment of judicial or other institutions, including possibly an ombudsperson, to prevent executive-level abuse of power.

An essential condition for effective popular participation in democratic processes is the promotion of mass civic education. The civil society can be further strengthened by setting up NGOs which are committed to the democratization process. It remains necessary also to promote the effective and more direct involvement of women in the political process in general and especially in the political institutions of a democratizing Africa.



## **Section II**

**Comparative**

**Issues**

## ELECTORAL OPERATIONS IN A DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM

*A workshop led by Gabriel Murillo (IFES), Chairman, Department of Political Science, Universidad de los Andes, Bogota, Colombia, and Patrick Merloe, Senior Associate for Election Processes, NDI. This workshop discussed the relationship between respect for human rights, transparency and citizen participation in democratic election systems.*

Democracy implies participation in government and a government respectful of the human rights of its citizens. The degree and quality of citizens' participation in the electoral process can be an indicator of the overall strength and sustainability of the democracy.

The ground rules for citizen participation in elections have been established with growing specificity through a number of international conventions created in the past decades and through states' practices, particularly since the end of the Cold War. The right of citizens to participate in their government is stated most fundamentally in Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

*Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his [or her] country, directly or through freely chosen representatives... The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent voting procedures.*

All of these internationally agreed-upon freedoms provide basic guidance for governments and election authorities as they shape the mechanisms through which the will of citizens is expressed. These freedoms have very specific implications for the administration of elections.

The citizen's right to participate in government has its complement in the government's obligation to permit and facilitate that participation. Citizens' participation in government through elections is enhanced by governmental measures intended to build confidence in the electoral system. A primary means of building confidence is to permit and encourage citizen participation in all aspects of the electoral process.

Patrick Merloe described several means in which public confidence in electoral processes could be enhanced.

"Transparency" in the process is an important factor in enhancing confidence. The electoral process should be open so that political contestants can view all its aspects from the drafting of election laws and selection of electoral administrators through to the tabulation of results and resolution of electoral complaints. Likewise, the public should be able to witness all the steps in the election process through citizen monitors and the media.

The second way to enhance confidence is to involve the political parties directly in the process whether it is negotiations on the electoral law, a party code of conduct, representation on the electoral administration or oversight bodies, or participation in electoral monitoring and dispute resolution. Citizen groups should also have a role in monitoring the electoral process and their monitoring function should not be limited to observing the events of election day itself but should be extended to cover campaign and count.



*L-R, Antonio Caetano de Sousa (Angola),*

*Gabriel Murillo (Columbia) and*

*Patrick Merloe (NDI)*

Another means of enhancing public confidence and participation in the electoral process is through guarantees of due process in all aspects of electoral administration. Election authorities must be empowered to take effective and independent action to protect the integrity of the election process, using all legislative, regulatory and judicial means to prevent unfair treatment of political contestants and voters, and to redress violations when they occur. Finally, the international community can provide election assistance through monitoring efforts that can help deter fraud while supporting the public and by providing technical assistance to strengthen electoral administration.

Gabriel Murillo followed with a brief presentation on strengthening participatory democracy. He described the need for a new, active partnership between citizenry and government which would acknowledge the need to enhance citizen participation in decision-making beyond the election of representatives. Such participatory democracy requires respect for fundamental human rights and rule of law but it also requires additional mechanisms for citizen input. Examples include, referenda and plebiscites, impeachment, citizen legislative initiatives, town meetings, and citizen monitoring of government programs (and elections).

Building and sustaining a participatory democracy implies the need for election administrators to be guided by certain principles to guarantee neutrality, non-partisanship and an openness to input from citizens and political parties. Election authorities have the responsibility of encouraging participation and consensus-building from political parties and civic organizations on electoral processes; guaranteeing the provision of timely and equal information to all relevant actors in elections; channeling resources to civic and voter education; promoting citizen involvement in election monitoring; coordinating the equitable use of the mass media in election coverage and information dissemination; supporting legal mechanisms for the resolution of complaints, disputes and election violations; and opening the door to the international community for monitoring and assistance.

### **Discussion**

The discussion continued the themes of participation and confidence-building, centering around three areas of action needed to ensure the sustainability of a democratic electoral process and of a democracy as a whole: education, monitoring, and the institutionalization of checks and balances. All three of these areas of action have implications for election administrators, political parties, NGOs, and the international community.

Citizen participation requires an informed citizenry. Civic and voter education should be an important priority of electoral bodies. It is a task that election authorities share with political parties. NGOs also have a role to play. Some participants noted the need for civic and voter education programs to be objective and nonpartisan. If NGOs are to undertake such programs, election authorities may need to monitor the programs to ensure that accurate and nonpartisan information is being disseminated.

Some participants stated that training programs should also be extended to political parties leaders and election administrators. These two groups need to be well-versed in the principles of democratic elections and in the details of electoral laws and regulations.



*Alberto Lopez (Guinea Bissau)*

Increasingly, electoral processes in Africa are being monitored by domestic and international bodies. Although some participants thought that the international role should be limited to observing and reporting, others believed that the international community provides valuable and needed technical assistance and should be more engaged in the electoral process. Assistance should be part of a long-term commitment to democratic institution building.

In addition to election-day activities, the international community should be involved in the pre- and post-election periods and work with all the actors in the electoral process, particularly domestic monitoring groups. Several participants suggested seeking regional assistance in addition to international assistance. International observers are particularly valuable when governments do not allow domestic monitors to organize and operate. It was also suggested that long-term international monitoring can be useful in helping electoral authorities to keep pressure on the government to respect the law and maintain a level playing field.

It was generally agreed that domestic election monitors can play a positive role in building confidence and participation in the electoral process by adding to the credibility of the work of the electoral administration and the legitimacy of the electoral process. Their value is enhanced by the degree to which they operate in a nonpartisan and professional manner. Therefore, continued training for domestic election monitors was considered a priority by workshop participants.

Perhaps the key underlying theme of the workshop was the recognition that democratic elections cannot be created by the electoral law itself, or even by the electoral authorities alone. Democratic elections, and sustainable democracy, are built through a partnership of electoral authorities, political parties, NGOs, ordinary citizens, and sometimes, international support.

While working toward the common goal of credible and legitimate elections, these partners also can find themselves in an adversarial relationship which, far from being negative, is the primary guarantor of a sustainable democracy, if kept within bounds.

Political parties, election observers and electoral authorities, working together while monitoring each other's behavior, provide the checks and balances that can ensure compliance with the law and a sufficiently fair and open electoral process so that the will of the people can be accurately expressed.

## ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNS AND PRE-ELECTION ISSUES

*This workshop examined prerequisites for free and fair elections and the creation of a "level playing field" for political competition. The discussion covered legal recognition of political parties, candidate and party ballot qualification, adequate resources for campaigning, media access and coverage, misuse of government resources, impediments to campaigning, party codes of conduct, party liaison committees, complaint mechanisms and dispute resolution. The presenter was Patrick Merloe, NDI's Senior Associate for Election Processes.*

Mr. Merloe noted that the issue of whether elections are truly democratic is often determined by developments preceding election day. He noted that the recognition of political organizations as legal entities, with the right to seek governmental power through the electoral process is fundamental to pluralist democracy. Any examination of an election system therefore must include the political party law and other elements necessary for genuine political competition, often referred to as a "level playing field". Delimitation of election districts, candidate and party qualification for the ballot, and the voter registration process are important elements that often precede the official election campaign.

The principle of non-discrimination is central to these elements as well as to those at work during the election campaign itself. At the core of the level playing field question is the degree of equity political contestants actually obtain in matters such as campaign financing, media access and coverage, and availability of material resources. A second core issue is the effective compliance with and enforcement of election-related laws and regulations.

Time may be the most valuable resource. As election administrators need time to prepare the election apparatus, political contestants need time to set campaign strategy, develop a program and message, recruit campaigners, raise money and other resources as well as communicate their messages to prospective voters. Timing of elections must allow competitors sufficient opportunity to accomplish these tasks in a meaningful way.

While it is almost impossible to provide equal resources to every political contestant, equitable resources are necessary to a genuine electoral contest. It may be necessary to differentiate between major and lesser competitors; however, all qualified contestants either should possess or be provided with at least those resources required to ensure a fair opportunity to compete. This could be done with full public funding, partial public funding supplemented with private fundraising, by providing public matching funds or solely by private fundraising where such sources are adequate. Campaign spending and contribution limits as well as disclosure requirements are important related issues.

Steps are necessary to prevent misuse of government resources for the electoral advantage of any one contestant. Such resources belong to the citizens of a country and should not be used for certain contestants only. These items include government employees campaigning on official time or using government equipment, using one's position as a government official to gain media coverage for electoral purposes, and using government jobs, public works or services to gain votes.



*L-R, Hamida Sheikh (Tanzania), and*

*Elaine Raftopoulos (Zimbabwe)*

Gaining fair access to the mass communications media to deliver campaign messages is another important element to the level playing field, as is the issue of objective and balanced news coverage of political contestants and issues of import to the elections. The mass media are also central to adequate voter education programs.

Impediments to campaigning such as violence against candidates, campaigners and prospective voters was also discussed. Party codes of conduct were seen as useful tools when arrived at through dialogue among the competitors. The role of election administrators in facilitating such dialogue and in setting up party liaison committees at the national, regional and local levels was also addressed. Liaison committees were seen as useful in building relationships among the parties as well as with election officials which can help to avoid conflicts or resolve them informally.

It was generally agreed that an effective electoral complaint mechanism is critical to a fair electoral process. What ever the specific mechanism (within the election commission, by special electoral tribunals or by regular courts with expedited process), it was agreed that appropriate legal sanctions must be available to deter and punish violators. The participants also noted the experience in South Africa where electoral disputes were subjected to mediation as a regular part of the complaint process. Such alternatives to litigation were seen to have value in appropriate circumstances.

Participants agreed that the level playing field issues were critical to holding genuine democratic elections and that early involvement of election officials, political contestants and citizens in addressing these issues is crucial to electoral success.



*A Workshop in Session*

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## **ELECTION DAY CASE STUDIES: DOMINICAN REPUBLIC AND NIGER**

*Adamou Kombo, formerly second Vice-President of Niger's High Council of the Transitional Parliament and President of the Supervisory Election Commission, and Patrick Merloe, NDI's, Senior Associate for Election Processes, examined reasons for the positive experience of one election and the negative experience of the other. Mr. Merloe's presentation dealt with the Dominican Republic, Mr. Kombo's with Niger.*

### **Case Study 1 - Dominican Republic**

The Dominican Republic's post-Trujillo history of turbulent presidential elections included the 1990 contest, when opposition charges of voting count manipulation threatened to spark another popular revolt. All parties appealed to former President Jimmy Carter, then heading an international observer delegation at the elections, to mediate. The ensuing agreement agreed to by all the political parties called for a retabulation of the vote. However, soon after the international dele-

gation departed, the Election Commission cancelled the process and the incumbent President was declared the winner.

Despite this, domestic and international pressure resulted in a number of electoral reforms which were to play a critical role in the electoral crisis of May to August 1994. The Dominican Republic also accepted international technical aid from both IFES and the Organization of American States (OAS) in the 1994 electoral process.

The first reform was to reinitiate the voter registration process using a computerized system with photo ID cards. This required collecting and processing a lot of data at a large number of sites selected by the Election Commission. Much of the data was recorded or transcribed wrongly. Many voter cards turned out to be inaccurate and had to be turned over for correction, necessitating further delays. Many people were frustrated and did not complete the process, while an estimated 200,000 failed to return to pick up their cards. This caused a lack of public confidence in the voter registry.

The second reform was the reconstitution of the Election Commission which was expanded from three to five members. All three parliamentary political parties could nominate candidates. However, the incumbent President was given the power to nominate two of the members. Since his political party also had a nominating vote, this meant that it controlled three of the five positions. This caused a lack of public confidence in the independence of the Election Commission.

The third reform was to increase the number of polling stations by one-third. This created a problem with the large number of personnel who had to be recruited and trained to serve as first-time polling officers which did not get underway until the last minute.

NGOs did not mobilize for domestic monitoring, and in general there was insufficient civic involvement in the election process. However, a major change was the Catholic Church's decision to intervene and get all the political parties to sign a civility pact (or code of conduct) regulating their behavior towards one another. A "Civility Commission" was set up to oversee this process.

Of note too were some apparent minor technical hitches in preparations for the election. The most significant was the fact that the political parties did not receive copies of the electoral lists that were used at polling sites. The copies the Election Commission sent them had been printed approximately two weeks prior to the election.

The international community was invited to send observers. OAS, IFES, NDI and CAPEL (an inter-American association for election assistance) sent delegations. IFES, NDI and OAS coordinated their activities very closely.

Within two hours of the polls being opened, thousands of voters with apparently valid voter ID cards were being turned away because their names were not on the voter registry. Their names did, however, appear on the lists sent out earlier to the political parties. The problem was widespread, the pattern suggesting that those being disenfranchised were supporters of the two main opposition parties. Observer delegations confirmed this with polling site presidents and even with the incumbent party's agents.

The Election Commission rejected the parties' appeal that these people be allowed to vote using a form of "challenged ballot." Only after the international observer leadership and the "Civility Commission" also recommended remedial action did the Election Commission reverse itself. However, the Commission's

decision was announced 12 minutes after the polls closed. While they announced a three-hour extension of polling hours, most of the polling stations had no way of knowing the announcement had been made. The action of the Election Commission, largely undermined by its timing, had caused yet another electoral crisis in the Dominican Republic.

NDI and the OAS issued statements immediately following the election. NDI, noting it could not quantify the magnitude of the problem, said it was apparent, with only about 28,000 votes separating the incumbent from his closest challenger, that it could effect the election outcome. NDI also stated that the pattern of disenfranchisement suggested there might be a deliberate manipulation and urged the Dominican authorities to launch an investigation and take the appropriate remedial steps. The international delegations also called on the opposition parties to remain calm and to use all legal avenues available to resolve the situation.

The Election Commission set up a special investigative commission which included two technical experts provided by IFES and OAS. They were able to establish that a minimum of 28,000 people had been disenfranchised but that it may have been as many as 45,000.

The final margin of victory in the preliminary count was 22,000 votes. Pressure mounted for new or supplementary elections. By a vote of three to two the Election Commission certified that the incumbent had won, ignoring its own investigation, and precipitated a major political crisis that was only resolved by an extraordinary political solution.

Backed by the Civility Commission and the international community, the opposition parties negotiated a political solution to the crisis. As a result, parliament amended the Dominican constitution in two important respects. The incumbent would remain in office for only two years, with a special election to fill the final two years of term, and Presidents would no longer be allowed to succeed themselves to a second term of office.

### **Lessons learned**

Technical improvements such as computerization and other reforms do not necessarily make for free and fair elections. Where an election administration lacks political will and independence, the result can be electoral failure. When the opposition remains rational, uses the courts and is politically inclusive, it can solve problems politically. Civil society must play an active role to ensure genuine democratic elections, and the international community can at times play a constructive role in monitoring election processes and supporting resolution of potential conflicts.

### **Case Study 2 - Niger**

Niger's successful political transition and elections stem from the determination of the people to have a free, just and transparently run society. The creation of an independent national conference catalyzed the drive to consolidate the nation's electoral and democratic processes. The Electoral Commission was created by law of the transitional parliament which mandated it to supervise all aspects and phases of the elections.



*Adamou Kambo (Niger)*



The Commission supervised another national body which, under the direction of the Minister of the Interior, was in charge of electoral logistics. Members included the Ministers of Finance and Justice, plus representatives of the political parties. The decision to involve the executive branch was deliberate because government on all levels, regional, local and municipal, had the tools essential to the material and logistical organization of the elections. Also, it was felt that not to involve the executive might prove less beneficial overall.

The Electoral Commission's membership comprised nine members of the Transitional Parliament, plus representatives from the different human rights associations, worker and student unions, and the country's various judicial organs, as well as a number of individuals chosen by consensus based on their moral integrity.

Four sub-committees served the Electoral Commission. One handled civic and voter education. The finance sub-committee was in charge of technical and logistical aspects for the elections and worked closely with the Interior Minister's group. The legislative sub-committee ensured that the Minister's group observed the electoral law. The fourth sub-committee was responsible for ensuring that the executive branch took all the necessary security measures during the campaign and election.

In addition, the Commission set up representatively staffed regional and local offices throughout the country which were tasked with ensuring that administrative arrangements and preparations for the elections were carried out promptly, properly and efficiently. To reinforce this point, the Commission regularly conducted on-site evaluations.

The Electoral Commission remained neutral and impartial in its efforts to ensure fair electoral practices and thereby reinforce public confidence about the elections. It also ran a radio and TV voter education campaign in all the main national languages in addition to French, Niger's official language.

Two important goals were accomplished. There was no disruption of the electoral process due to intimidation or violence and voters were encouraged to come out and make their personal choice through the secret ballot, assured that the results would be announced as quickly as possible.

Other reasons contributing to the success of Niger's first elections include the support of the international community, starting with the efforts of the United States and France and the truce that set up the elections. Also, a series of NDI-organized conferences and programs held between 1991 and 1992 dealing with electoral issues, including training and civic education, was significant. So too were the services of the NDI electoral expert whose advice and expertise proved to be a great asset to the Commission's work.

## COMPARATIVE ELECTORAL SYSTEMS

*Michael Krennerich of the Institute of Political Science at Heidelberg University dealt with the range of choices available between proportional representation and single member type systems, the combinations in between, and some criteria for evaluating electoral systems in general. His remarks were followed with a presentation by Professor John Makumbe of the University of Zimbabwe. This workshop session was chaired by Prof. Joel Barkan of the University of Iowa.*

All electoral systems in use around the world stem from the two fundamental electoral principles of majority and proportional representation. The main objective of the former is to produce a parliamentary majority for one party or for a coalition of parties. The latter aims to reflect the existing social forces and political groups in a given country so that the share of a given party's votes and seats are relatively equivalent.

Electoral systems contain four distinct elements covering districting, the type of candidacy, voting procedures and the decision formula or rules used to convert votes into seats.

**Districting** — drawing up electoral districts determines the effects of electoral systems on the vote-seat relationship and is among the most controversial issues in assessing an electoral system.

**Type of candidacy** — fundamental distinction between individual candidatures and different list forms is important because of the role political parties can play in the nomination process and the type of selection that can be made by the voter.

**Voting procedures** — delineating whether electorate votes for an individual candidate or a party list.

**The decision formula** — rules used in the conversion of votes into seats which provide the basic distinction between the majority formula and the proportional formula.

These technical elements have political effects for example with regard to the degree of proportionality between votes and seats, the relationship between voters and representatives, and the relationship between the elected candidate and the party.

Mr. Krennerich offered five criteria for evaluating electoral systems:

**Representation** — Are the nation's socio-political interests adequately reflected in the elected representative bodies. Some interpret this criterion to mean representation for "all" — i.e. representation of different societal groups such as minorities and women; others see it as meaning "fair" representation — i.e. more or less proportional to the social and political forces and a fairly equivalent relationship between seats and votes.

**Concentration** — The aggregation of social interests and political opinions to facilitate political decisions and empower the public for political action. Formation of a stable government based on a parliamentary majority formed by a party or coalition is a good indicator that this criterion is being achieved.

**Participation** — Refers specifically to the extent to which the voter is able to express his/her political will within the framework of either the single candidate vote or party list vote.

**Simplicity** — Extent to which the electorate is able to understand the electoral system, the implication of its vote, and appreciate basic electoral administration considerations.



*L-R, Youssouf Saleh-Abbas (Chad),*

*Taofiki Aminou (Benin) and*

*Adamou Kombo (Niger)*

**Legitimacy** — Whether or not the electoral system is accepted by a pluralist society as a proper and credible institutional means of establishing a representative government. Do losing minority groups or parties accept the electoral results? Although the requirement for legitimacy of an electoral system is obvious, it is often difficult to assess.

There is no ideal electoral system. No single system can satisfy the many competing societal and political demands at the same time in an absolute manner. Conflicts between different socio-political objectives are the rule. The increased capacity of one electoral system to respond to a particular functional demand inevitably means a diminished capacity to meet another. The choice of an electoral system should be based on socio-political conditions and other factors specific to each country.

Mr. Krennerich expressed the personal view that in the case of segmented societies, one of the most important demands an electoral system should meet is a representative function. Proportional representation systems are best suited to meet this objective. He conceded that it may not make sense to break with the political tradition by introducing a proportional representation system in countries which are used to plurality systems. Such a transition may not be politically viable since successful reform requires a consensus among the main political forces or parties, especially the party in power which seldom has an interest in weakening its base of political power. In such cases, he recommended opting for incremental reforms.

One possible strategy for furthering electoral reform in African countries which use the plurality system may be to introduce some elements of the proportional system into the prevailing electoral system as a compromise. For example, such a strategy could combine a plurality system in single-member constituencies with an additional proportional list at regional or national level. This would offer voters the possibility of voting as they are accustomed to in single member constituencies and procure, at the same time, minority representation as people also vote (with the same or a second vote) for a party list of proportional representation at regional or national level.



*L-R, Nathaniel Mmono (Botswana) and  
Maduo S. Maoto (Botswana)*

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*Professor John Makumbe of the University of Zimbabwe directed his remarks to the specifics of African elections. Under a series of admonitory headings, he presented cap-sulated guidelines as to how elections should be conducted and identified a number of problems commonly associated with electoral systems in Africa.*

**Establish a level playing field** — Too often, electoral systems are manipulated or subject to arbitrary rule changes, bringing into question the legitimacy of the elected government. To the extent that electoral systems determine the rules and procedures that are followed in converting votes to seats, it is important that these rules and procedures remain stable and are not changed regularly to suit the interests of incumbent parties at the expense of their opponents.

**Build consensus** — Most electoral systems in Africa are borrowed from former colonial powers. Developing or modifying them to meet a country's needs is a national responsibility. Groups representing all facets of a given society, includ-

ing NGOs and various civil groups should be involved in designing a fair, appropriate and nationally accepted electoral system. The principle of electoral monitoring should be recognized as an important human right in promoting democracy and adopted by all countries as standard procedure to further transparency.

**Nurture political tolerance** — Given Africa's general experience, electoral systems should promote political integration, unity, and national stability in order to foster a culture of political tolerance.

**Keep it simple and inexpensive** — Elections are a financial and material burden on the limited resources of many African nations. Incumbent political parties are able to marshal resources necessary for conducting and competing in an election. Opposition parties are less able to. Africa needs electoral systems that are simple — not reliant on extensive technical requirements — and that allow everyone to participate in the process.

**Start registration early** — Establishing accurate electoral districts is a major challenge, given the large number of persons in Africa who lack valid ID, are displaced or transient, and otherwise not registered. Greater attention should be given to collecting sound census data and significantly extending the average electoral registration period prior to an election.

**Promote freedom of association** — Political parties facilitate mobilization of the electorate, educate voters on the issues at stake in an election, highlight local and national problems and suggest policy alternatives. "Freedom of association" is a democratic principle. An electoral system should neither discourage the formation of political parties nor the formation of coalitions if democracy is to be upheld and promoted.

**Represent the interests of all citizens** — An electoral system should ensure that those who win elections have a duty to represent the interests of all the citizens of their respective constituencies irrespective of their political affiliations. Here again, the role of political culture is decisive.

## **Discussion**

Some of the election administrators in attendance wondered whether a session on electoral systems was necessary. "Our powers are limited and do not include influencing the choice of electoral systems." The response: "legislators look to you to educate and guide them in their efforts to select or modify an electoral system." Politicians depend on the electoral administrators for informed expertise and judgement. The electoral authorities/commissions can provide a neutral arena for proposing an acceptable electoral system formula.

Participants agreed that the fair representation and political integration of minorities was an important function of an electoral system and essential for the legitimacy of a political system. Discussion centered on methods of achieving a more inclusive form of representation through the choice of proportional representation or single member districts or some combination of the two.

A major problem with the plurality system is that it often fails to produce an outcome that is broadly representative of the political forces and corresponding constituencies within a given society. In particular, it does not permit the representation of ethnic minorities which do not have regional strongholds. This can contribute to ethnic tensions.

Mr. Krennerich identified three types of election results in countries using plurality systems: (1) one party wins all the seats (Lesotho); (2) one party wins over two-thirds of the seats (Zimbabwe, Zambia); (3) different parties win in their ethnic strongholds. Such outcomes suggested lack of representativeness.

Professor Barkan reminded participants that an electoral system is only one mechanism for achieving inclusiveness in a political system and creating a more stable form of representative democracy. Other mechanisms include federalism, bi-cameral legislatures, appointment of a prime minister representing minority interests in a country, reserved seats, etc. Proportional representation has to be considered on a country by country basis and backed up by good demographic statistics and a close scrutiny of past electoral behavior.

Professor Barkan stressed the need to carefully evaluate the structure of the electoral system that is being considered with the distribution of political interests that actually exist within a country. In Africa, this mainly means the distribution of linguistic and ethnic interests and how they are distributed spatially across a society. There is a great variation in the structure of ethnicity among African countries. How those various groups are situated and distributed has a lot to do with whether or not some form of proportional representation will actually encompass all these interests or whether it won't make any difference.

Some participants thought the proportional representation system was flawed to the extent that it encourages a proliferation of small political parties, hindering efforts to build national unity. Others felt that proportional representation denied voters the opportunity to have their concerns represented through an individual member of parliament directly elected by them rather than the party that he or she represents. They stressed the importance of having a clear and direct link between constituents and their elected representative.

Participants agreed that there is no ideal electoral system. African countries must adapt their electoral systems to fit the particular circumstances found in their respective countries. Senegal and Guinea were cited as examples of countries which have modified electoral laws to achieve greater minority representation through a combination of majoritarian and proportional representation systems.

## **Section III**

# **Organizational and Technical Considerations**

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## ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF ELECTORAL SYSTEMS

*IFES staff members, Joe Baxter, Chief Technical Advisor, Ghana, and Tom Bayer, Senior Program Officer, Africa and Near East, presented the workshop which focused on the theme "successful election management means effective organization".*

Mr. Baxter characterized the task of administering an election as a highly complex exercise involving hundreds of subtasks, complicated scheduling, and intricate monitoring of activities. It is also a political activity that must be perceived as impartial yet sensitive to the political processes at work in the country. The best-intentioned election administrators ultimately fail if they lack a sound administrative structure for effectively managing the conduct of elections. Developing that structure is their primary responsibility.

There are two basic types of election commissions. Those that function as an oversight body where the commission acts as a policy-making/regulatory authority with a strong administrative staff and those where the election commissioners themselves take an active role in the day-to-day administration of an election. In either case, for the commission is to be effective, its organizational structure has to be independent, impartial and competent.

An election commission must be free to act in the interests of all voters and not of any particular candidate in order to build the trust needed so that political parties will respect the process and the results of the election. Generally, election commissions are made up of individuals perceived by political parties and public alike as impartial and worthy of their confidence. They can also be composed of representatives of the major political parties or movements, bringing a balance to the commission's work that promotes impartiality and transparency.

To maintain credibility, election commissions must apply the law in a consistent and even-handed manner. However, the most independent and impartial election commission is ineffectual if it cannot register the voters, qualify the candidates, train the polling station officials, or deliver the ballots on time. The public and political parties must see that the commission is capable of fulfilling its mission.

Mr. Baxter acknowledged that organizing and training thousands of employees, procuring hundreds of items in huge quantities, writing regulations, developing and implementing a civic education plan, registering voters, monitoring the campaign, developing balloting and counting procedures, developing a public information strategy, or coping with the logistical and severe time constraints, challenges even the best administrator's management skills.

Faced with this reality, an effective election administrator supervises, organizes, and directs but does not attempt to micro-manage every detail. A successful election administrator establishes an effective election management team and delegates accordingly.

Mr. Baxter outlined some general techniques of election administration that have proven effective in managing the complex electoral process.

**Establish a clear purpose** —The election administrator's first task is to create a common purpose and vision among the commission staff. It should be concrete



*L-R, David Adeenze-Kangah (Ghana),*

*Joe Baxter (IFES) and*

*Kwadwo Afari-Gyan (Ghana)*

and easily understood by all election staff from the commission chairperson to the officials in the polling stations.

**Identify the major task** — The election calendar is the most valuable management tool of any election administrator. It should contain every major task to be completed by the election commission, provide a timeline for completing each task, and identify a person/entity responsible.

**Identify, organize and assign subtasks** — The major tasks of putting an election together consist of a series of subtasks that must be assigned to various staff and departments. Subtasks should be detailed and specific and organized chronologically into areas of related activities.

**Set deadline dates** — The election administrator must establish deadlines for completing each task and subtask. Extra time should be factored in to cover the delays and problems that inevitably arise. It is useful to establish periodic milestone dates to evaluate progress, address problems and modify the work plan if necessary. Setting deadlines and enforcing them is vital to election calendar scheduling.

**Monitor the progress** — Develop assignment sheet listing each task and, in order of progression, subtask, with the names of assigned staff members, plus dates for progress reviews and completion. Sheet should be regularly updated to keep track of all subtasks.

### **Management of the public process**

Both Mr. Bayer and Mr. Baxter emphasized that being a successful election administrator also requires having a strategy for managing public relations and the press, political party relations, and relationships with NGOs in order to build and sustain public trust and confidence. A proactive public information campaign which allows public interest groups to know how the electoral process is going can serve to increase confidence in the elections process. It can be the equivalent of a *de facto* monitoring or oversight network.

Candidates, political parties, civic organizations, and other independent groups should have access to the same information that is available to election administrators. The more people that understand the electoral process and the work of the election authority and/or commission, the more likely an election system will be effective. Moreover, every election office has a mission and a message that must be relayed to the people. However, the press has an agenda of its own that is not necessarily compatible with that of the election commission. Therefore, developing a public relations strategy that puts the election commission in a position of control is essential.

### **Questions and discussion**

While there is no one perfect election management system designed for all circumstances, experience has shown that applying an organized systematic approach to each phase of the process is the most effective way of ensuring successful election administration. Challenged as to what two pieces of advice they would give their colleagues about running elections, the participants embarked on a wide-ranging discussion, a recurring note of which was the need to be realistic and not get over-extended whether in terms of scheduling or budget.



Issues which came up repeatedly included the importance of planning and logistics — of allowing sufficient time to plan and conduct the election properly; transparency and the need for public accountability; the role of voter and civic education; establishing and updating the voter's register; maintaining a realistic electoral calendar; preparing budgets consistent with expectations and available resources, and, as necessary, identifying low-cost ways of achieving objectives.

Other aspects which were touched upon included knowing the perimeters of the electoral authority's powers and ensuring it had a balanced and representative make up; liaising closely with all donors throughout the process; resolving major problems that arise at the grassroots level directly by going to the region; establishing contact with all constituencies; keeping the public informed; and, setting-up a complaint resolution process.

There was general recognition that the independence of the electoral authority was closely linked to the integrity of the election administrators themselves. Said one participant, "our job is to protect the democratic process". Therefore, the Commission's independence has to be clearly spelled out in law.

Others said it was important to establish the civil society as a full partner in the electoral process. Representatives of NGOs and the private sector are often able to provide essential resources such as personnel, expertise, and training. In addition, the involvement of civil society lends greater credibility and legitimacy to the electoral process.

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## **COMPUTERIZING ELECTORAL ADMINISTRATION**

*In his plenary presentation, Harry Neufeld, a management consultant specializing in the application of information technology to electoral administration, and formerly Director of Information Technology at Elections Canada, discussed the benefits and risks of computerizing elements of electoral administration.*

Applying information technology to more efficiently and more cost-effectively manage information has become a management challenge for many electoral administrators. It will continue to be a challenge as computer technology becomes more affordable.

Senior election administrators who have managed the transition generally concur that benefits center around four major areas: the re-use of information from previous electoral events; streamlined research and planning methods; enhanced reporting ability; and cost avoidances. Most also admit that introducing technology costs more money and takes more time than anticipated.

In a world where ten years from now computers will be 60 times faster and cost only 15% of what they do today, the risk of technical obsolescence is a very real consideration for election administrators who might have to plan for only two elections in the same time span.

Clearly the fusion of computer and communication technologies is going to

change how election administration operates all around the globe. Systems designed to support electoral administration should be fast, simple, robust and "user-friendly" to allow for the untrained or undertrained people who most likely will be using them. They should also be reliable and accessible since, at the height of the election period, some systems must run 20 hours a day, seven days a week.

All election administrators need to be good contingency planners, especially in parliamentary democracies where there is no fixed schedule for elections. The most elaborate information technology computer system contingency plans generally involve a special site where data back-ups can be loaded and processing fully resumed in the event of a system failure. The simplest level of contingency planning is to have an ample supply of spare parts.

Special security procedures to protect confidentiality are an essential feature of computer systems used in elections but they have to be transparent if citizens are to have confidence that voter list information and election results will be tamper-proof.

Election administrators generally give priority to office automation needs such as word-processing, spreadsheet, electronic mail, when they first introduce information technology. Next comes voter lists or the register of voters.

Other computer technology applications cover logistical planning, supply management, election financing, PR system seat allocation programs, digitalized cartography, political party registration, election official profiles, systems to monitor adjudication and legal challenges, and programs to track training, and asset and site management processes.

The fundamental objective in constructing electoral information systems should be to manage the organizational information so that those who have access to it can easily find it. This assumes an organization is willing to treat information as an asset that needs to be managed at least as rigorously as it manages its fixed assets and finances. In this regard, given the cyclical nature of electoral administration information needs, electoral agencies should explore possible partnerships with other government or private sector organizations facing similar challenges in applying computer technology.

Electoral administrators can best manage expectations, timing and the costs associated with automating their information management by setting out their priorities in a succinct strategic plan. Good information technology systems require time: time for planning, for designing, for building, for testing, for training, for implementing, for supporting.

The costs associated with introducing information technology can be tremendous. The costs of taking risks with applying the technology can be even greater. Avoiding the information revolution altogether could prove to be the costliest option of all.

## VOTER REGISTRATION AND COMPUTERIZATION

*Harry Neufeld's presentation focused on voter registration issues and the use of computers to facilitate the production and updating of voter registers. It allowed participants to further explore the implications of applying information technology raised during Mr. Neufeld's plenary address.*

Mr. Neufeld posed eight questions to three workshop groups, a format variation which elicited less direct dialogue but ensured full participation. Summaries of the groups' responses to each of these questions follow.

### 1. Why register voters?

An initial response was couched as a rhetorical question — if an election is planned, how could the electoral administration *not* register voters? Other answers covered a wide range of applications and reasons. Foremost was the need to separate the eligible voting population from non-eligible persons.

Organizationally, it made sense for an election commission to register voters as an initial logistics planning step. Principally, because organizing a registration drive is a good test run of existing polling sites and points out where others may need to be situated come the time of the election. Also, it helps ascertain and quantify equipment and supply needs which will have to be met in time for the election.

Politically, voter registration is a tangible sign of the government's intent to conduct a transparent election. A register helps political parties determine how to allocate their resources in the most populated areas. It can also be used as a gauge of voter interest in the election.

### 2. Why computerize the register?

Most respondents felt that computerizing the register would increase efficiency by reducing overall time spent on registration. The system would eliminate duplicate registrations, promote uniformity in voter lists, facilitate easier updating and preparation of different types of statistical information, while allowing for more compact storage and security safeguards.

### 3. Why a permanent register?

Because it saves the electoral commission a great deal of work in countries where special elections are common or may be called within 30 days of the dissolution of a government. Organizing a new registration drive for every election is costly and impractical for countries which cannot afford a permanent registration staff. A permanent register provides a basis for a uniform, efficiently ordered system which can be especially useful to the political parties in terms of tracking demographic trends among voters and monitoring issues like redistricting.

### 4. What are the essential elements?

Participants' answers varied, possibly reflecting differing interpretations of the terms. One group opted for listing basic data covering name, age, gender, citizenship status, residence, voting location etc. Another group posited that to have



*L-R, Andrew A. Muwonge (Botswana)*

*and Therenca Sinuguruza (Burundi)*

a register, a commission had to have sufficient staff, archive and office space, clear registration regulations, and equipment. The third group suggested that a political consensus about the register, its design and regulations was a prerequisite for determining any of the elements.

#### **5. How is the register maintained?**

Suggestions and methods examined included updating through the regional/district registration offices and, where registration and voting systems are voluntary, the use of voter education to encourage voters to report any changes in their registration status.

Examples of other systems cited were the United States, where new registers are based on the existing register and the number who voted in the previous election (less those voters whose names are automatically deleted from the register for failing to cast a ballot in a minimum number of elections); and Canada, where, until recently, registrars conducted a house-to-house enumeration prior to each election. Yet another is automatic updating by directly linking into the civil registry process.

#### **6. How to apply computerization to the process?**

The groups suggested that computers be used to integrate information from the civil and voter registries as well as other relevant sources. Computer use should decentralize data-gathering to the lowest possible level, linking field and main office computers via local and wide area networks (LANs/WANs). An alternative would be to send all field office data on diskettes to head office. The level and security of computer storage, maintenance and data gathering must prove acceptable to all the political parties.

#### **7. How to keep the register up to date?**

Mr. Neufeld suggested three yardsticks for measuring voter registry efficiency: coverage — how many of the eligible voters are registered?; currency — how many of the eligible voters are at their current address etc.?; accuracy — does data listed differ from what was taken down during registration period? Systems should be designed to enable election administrators to answer these questions at every stage in the registration/ voting processes.

#### **8. How to make a voter register cost-effective**

Voter registers automatically linked to a civil registry as in Sweden are highly cost effective. However, Mr. Neufeld pointed out that in the United States and Canada there is public aversion to having so much personal data available in one location accessible to all levels of civil servants. Some make the case that a government that wishes to control the actions of citizens could isolate them much more quickly and efficiently aided by a central storage facility like an integrated register. Others argue that few countries can afford to maintain separate registers and personnel for each individual government activity.

The question facing most taxpaying citizens whose governments are constantly in the process of streamlining their data storage and gathering processes is, "should we sacrifice privacy for efficiency?" Put to the workshop participants, the answer was yes for two of the three groups with the remaining group unable to say yes or no.



*L-R, Zeid Al-Faiz (Jordan),*

*Louise Bailey (OAU) and*

*Mamadou Kane (OAU)*

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## VOTER AND CIVIC EDUCATION

*Carl Larkin, Program Officer, NDI, South Africa, and Rev. Fr. John Maviiri, Joint Christian Council of Uganda, facilitated discussions of various aspects of civic and voter education, including message development, use of the media, training methodologies, voter education in the context of democracy education, resource utilization, and government role vs. NGO role.*

Fr. Maviiri defined civic education as a carefully designed program to raise awareness about national events and to educate citizens about their own country, their rights and obligations, and their role as active participants in the democratic process. Civic education should be an ongoing, broad-based exercise made easier for all the actors involved by having a common goal and syllabus.

In his presentation on voter education, Mr. Larkin highlighted the significant relationship between government institutions and civic groups and the role both play in disseminating information to voters. Most participants acknowledged that the task of civic education is too large for any one agency to handle. It requires a coordinated effort by citizens, parties, election administrators, NGOs and the international community. Often these roles are defined in the electoral law.

There was general agreement that NGOs and political parties should play a role in civic education. However, while it is important for NGOs to be supported by the international community and to work in cooperation with the government, they should maintain their independence and neutrality. Some participants thought the political parties should refrain from civic education precisely because of their political status. Others suggested that election administrators serve as coordinators of civic education programs and, in this capacity, help ensure their impartiality.

Civic education programs should be on-going and not just confined to election periods. They should be well-planned, well-coordinated and seen as long-term processes. Many suggested incorporating civic education into school curriculums. On the issue of financial support for long-term programs, participants favored greater reliance on local resources rather than continued dependence on the international community.

Radio, print media, music, dance and theater should all be drawn upon to disseminate voter education messages. Participants spoke about the importance of NGOs setting up civic activist networks involving trade unions, women's groups and religious assemblies, to make voter education information and material available at the local community level.

How to evaluate civic education programs sparked a lively debate. Participants cited voter turnout, the numbers of spoiled ballots and the ability of the electorate to explain the electoral process as common measures by which to ascertain the impact of civic education.

Several important themes ran through the workshop. The first was recognition that civic education is too big an undertaking to be handled by an individual group. It must be coordinated and shared among election administrators, NGOs, political parties and the international community.

There was unanimity too that civic education must be conducted in an impartial manner. Also, local resources, human, financial or material, must be sought after vigorously when designing and implementing civic education programs.

## TRAINING OF ELECTORAL OFFICERS

*This workshop examined several aspects of putting together training programs for electoral officers — from training of trainers to selection of trainees. The presenters were Amare Tekle, former Commissioner, Eritrea Referendum Commission, and Stephen Akabway, Commissioner, Constituent Assembly Commission, Uganda.*

Experience acquired while serving as electoral commissioners in their respective countries had made it clear to both presenters just how important a role logistics and planning play in any electoral process. The needs of each African country vary significantly, which is why careful planning and assessment is required before training programs are drawn up.

Eritrea had not held an election in 40 years and South Africa had never had a full participatory election at all. Yet their situations differed. Although both countries dealt with a majority of voters who had never voted, the South African history of participation in organized anti-apartheid protest meant that its electorate had a different level of need than that of the Eritrea.

Knowing at the outset the number and level of personnel required for electoral training is of vital importance. In Africa where many different languages can be spoken in a country, language proficiency becomes an important determinant in recruiting and selecting candidates for training.

Having determined the type of training required, the first round of the training process is the training of trainers. Once trained, this core group of trainers will be deployed to outlying districts to teach polling station officials. Candidates should be experienced, mature individuals of good character and integrity. In Eritrea, retired professionals such as teachers, magistrates, and bureaucrats became election trainers. The numbers needed vary depending on the country and the number of polling stations.

Once the trainers are in place, the next phase is to recruit the polling station staff for training, drawing on college and high school students and members of youth organizations. It may be necessary to look to the open market for more experienced candidates to fill the posts of registration and presiding officers. This is an area where the expert advice of experienced organizations such as IFES, NDI, AAI, and IRI can be helpful.

Determining what is to be taught and the level of training needed for each electoral officer is another key element in electoral preparations. It is not necessary to teach everything to everyone. For example, only senior officials such as provincial, regional and district representatives need to be totally versed in the electoral law and the entire electoral process. They are the ones who will have to deal with complaints and determine whether they should be referred to the national electoral authority. Presiding officials need to guide and supervise polling activities and to address minor complaints from party agents and voters. Polling station staff should be able to ensure the efficient functioning of the voting process on election day.

An important aspect of training involves instilling staff at all levels with confidence and a sense of independence and impartiality. Equally important is to advise electoral staff to guard against overzealousness or officiousness.

As the democratic process gains hold and more elections are held, future



L-R, Amare Tekle (Eritrea) and  
Stephen Akabway (Uganda)

training needs will be less demanding and the training periods will become shorter. Eventually, there will be a pool of trained election officials available who will only need a few days' updating on changes in electoral law before each election.

### **Discussion**

A concern shared by several participants in the discussion period was the difficulty of selecting dependable candidates to train as electoral officials. One participant noted a propensity among would-be trainees to seek payment advances and then fail to appear for the training sessions.

The need to carefully monitor all phases of the training process was also stressed. Participants pointed out that the content of training programs can get distorted or diluted as it is passed down. Hence the importance of having properly trained instructors as well as ensuring that training manuals are written in accessible language.

One participant said his organization, which favors a top-down approach, also offers training to senior political party officials to enhance their awareness of their role and responsibilities during elections. Another said his country trained magistrates and polling officials, as well as political party members. By empowering the magistrates to make on-site spot-checks at the polling stations on election day, any irregularities are brought immediately to the attention of the different parties and officials for action. Others conceded that polling staff tended to be more alert and conscientious if they are aware of the possibility that a senior official may show up at any time.

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## **LOGISTICS OF ELECTION DAY - I**

*The facilitators set out to establish a working definition of election day logistics and to concentrate on the planning and preparation that takes place in the period between elections. They then turned to the need for flexibility in planning and action. The initial presentation was made by Tom Bayer, Senior Program Officer, Africa and the Near East, IFES, and Bruno Soares, Chief Technical Advisor, United Nations Electoral Assistance Project in Mozambique.*

Even the most elaborate logistics plan is subject to the reality of the country in which the election is to take place. Better, therefore, to have a simple plan which can be adjusted according to the circumstances, with as many supporting contingency plans as deemed necessary by the electoral administrator. It had been stated in plenary that an administrator should look at pre-election, election and post-election phases. Of equal concern to good administration, said Mr. Bayer, is the pre-pre-election phase.

Mr. Soares differentiated between the terms "electoral system", a set of functions geared to one end, the election, and "electoral process", the physical preparation for and realization of an election. Logistics planning, he said, begins at the point of "process".

Mr. Bayer illustrated the symbiosis between electoral system elements and parallel logistics planning. A country's cultural, social and political climate, its human and financial resources, the legal elections, campaign, voting and counting procedures, and existing government structure inform the logistics preparations developed to carry out the law.

Conversely, logistical issues such as terrain, transport and communications infrastructure, climate, all effect the design of the ballot, voting and counting procedures, and campaign activities. Existing political/conflict situations can predicate the way an election will be conducted.

The primary task of the election logistics planner is that of reconciling the exigencies of the electoral law/constitution/peace accord with the current circumstances to produce an organized election process. The election administrator may draw on the commission's experience and expertise to recommend adjustments to the elections procedure that may eventually result in a change in the electoral law.

This requires the understanding that elections are a national effort and that all administrators and their fellow citizens are ultimately responsible for the success of their own election processes. Also, that adequate managerial and fiscal decision-making autonomy will be delegated to the commission, ministries, or departments responsible for the organization and implementation of all aspects of election logistics.

To point up the value of advanced planning and contingency back-up, Mr. Soares cited the experiences in Angola and Mozambique. Noteworthy for the amount of international technical and financial assistance they received, both countries had still been in a state of war when initial plans were laid for their respective elections. Thus, their electoral systems had little if anything to do with the reality faced by those who eventually administered those elections.

### **Discussion**

The discussion revolved around election day planning, time allocation and whether it was possible to run future elections using national resources solely. One participant noted that the absence of a registration process in South Africa had complicated the entire logistics plan for the supply and distribution of ballots. He hoped planning would begin on the next elections while the lessons of the previous election were still fresh.

Uganda's experience of election funding, said one participant, was that there were many things the international community would not pay for. Countries should at least try for matching funds, he advised, since "democracy is by no means cheap."

While there had been financing for the Eritrian referendum, resourcing problems are anticipated in organizing the next elections, a participant said. On the other hand, electoral officials had learned about flexibility when they had to rebuild polling station huts blown down two days before the vote.

In Ghana, with 20,000 polling stations, a proper logistics plan was key to determining stocks and supplies and the other resources necessary. Even so, when the election got underway, it was with one rather than the three helicopters called for in the logistics plan. In Botswana, computer technicians failed to deliver on their promise to have voting and counting systems in place on time. The electoral commission's good standing with all the political parties enabled the process to go forward.



Finally, a participant argued that election planning in Africa is futile because elections are political rather than technical exercises. This point of view was rejected by one of the facilitators who said that lack of adequate communications or planning between ministries, between ministries and election commission, or between political parties and government, stem from failures in the electoral process, not futility in planning.

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## LOGISTICS OF ELECTION DAY - II

*Presenters IFES Chief of Staff, Jeff Fischer, and Joe Baxter, Chief Technical Advisor, Ghana, used the session to arrive at a working definition of election logistics, develop a logistics plan, and discuss the role of donor support in election logistics.*

Mr. Baxter led off by identifying three key aspects of logistics planning: (a) proper coverage of the pre- and post-election phases in addition to the election day events; (b) contingency planning; and, (c) good communications.

Participants agreed that the term logistics served as an umbrella for a number of common characteristics or requirements including timetable, budget, staffing, transport, communications, contingency planning capacity, resources and supplies, even access to precise meteorological data.

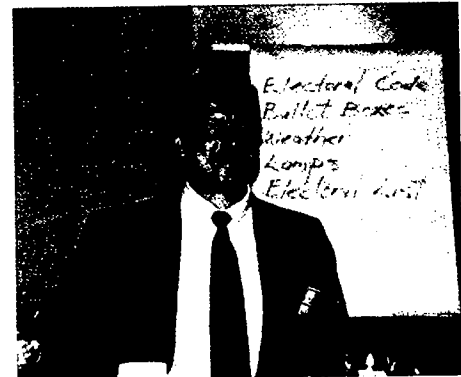
Mr. Fischer pointed out that the budgetary process is also a starting point for the logistics exercise. The budget plan has to take into account materials and supplies, including communications and transport needs, the lead time for punctual delivery and the storage/warehousing security needs.

Mr. Baxter noted that presentation of a precise budget and logistics plan can increase the electoral commission's credibility with government. This can prove invaluable in transitional elections where ministries that were previously responsible for electoral matters are sometimes ill disposed towards the independent commissions.

There was general agreement that logistical problems can be tremendous in many African countries and that election day logistics really bring the election authority's capacity and competence into sharp public focus. Problems common to many participants included rough terrain, bad road conditions, inadequate and/or insufficient vehicles, poor communications and unreliable fragile distribution systems. Combined with unrealistic scheduling, these factors often make the logistical exercise unduly reliant on military transport for the timely distribution of sensitive polling supplies including ballots. The issue of credibility can also arise in circumstances where the military is closely identified in the public eye with the incumbent government.

A last-minute problem encountered in Senegal was the inability to count ballots at night where polling stations had no electric power. Paraffin lamps had to be rushed to the sites in question, mostly rural and difficult to reach.

Inadequate road infrastructure and poor communications in Angola greatly



Jeff Fischer (IFES)

increased the cost of election administration. Helicopters had to be used extensively and these proved very expensive to operate, it was stated.

Poor election administration generally stemmed from poor planning. Malawi, a participant stated, had benefited from an extensive pre-election critical path analysis which made it easy to know what to do when. This pre-planning also allowed for flexibility in dealing with last-minute problems. For example, when it emerged that there was a shortfall in ballot allocations, an overnight print-run was delivered by 6 a.m. on the morning of the election, all duly monitored.

Fischer noted that elections are generally set by statute and cannot be extended because of inadequate preparation. Even when the numbers of kits and other supplies and materials have been worked out for each polling site, the delivery schedule has to take into account terrain, and the bulk and weight of the supplies, plus security considerations, before determining the method of transport.

The sources of supply for each election commodity must be determined, as well as the costs, lead time for ordering and warehousing requirements. Some election commodities must be planned, at the outset, to be handled with a greater degree of care. For example, ballots and finger stain have their own security demands entailing the use of control numbers and transport logs from the time of initial preparation to the final delivery at each polling station.

Turning to the future of elections in Africa, Baxter suggested that governments would have to operate and fund their elections without donor assistance. How would they go about doing it?

One participant said that countries would simply need to learn to do "elections on the cheap". Others said they would place greater emphasis on training, recycling equipment, and planning. However, it was conceded that some assistance will be required for the next ten years at least.

According to a participating United Nations official, experiences in Mozambique had indicated that it was important for a country to "own" its electoral process and not to expect that all funding and management be provided by the donor community. It was suggested that donor interest is likely to remain substantial in high-profile, transitional elections. Others agreed that donor involvement can artificially inflate the overall costs of an election. There was also general consensus that some sort of continuing electoral administration is necessary to successfully stage elections in a cost-effective manner once donor involvement ends.

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## VOTE TABULATION AND COMPLAINT RESOLUTION

*The workshop addressed issues related to the vote tabulation process, from polling place or local counting station up to the national level. Emphasis was placed on the importance of transparency at each stage of this process. Discussion included the utility of parallel vote tabulation, as well as the resolution of complaints prior to the official proclamation of results. Facilitators were Michael Carroll, Program Officer, AAI, Adrian Muunga, Foundation for Democratic Processes, Zambia, and, from NDI, Patrick Merloe, Senior Associate for Election Processes, and Ned McMahon, Senior Program Officer.*

What happens from the time the polling station closes until the final results are announced was the major theme of this session devoted to the counting process. The goal was to identify the type of planning needed to make that process smooth including measures to reduce administrative error and increase confidence. Presentations and discussion included analysis of the types of challenge procedures that are in place.

The stage at which the votes are counted and the final vote tabulation is released is the critical point in the overall electoral process where winners and losers of the election are determined. Public confidence is often skeptical and suspicions of this phase because of past experiences where vote counts have been stopped in the middle, where there has been a lack of transparency in moving ballot boxes from polling station to counting center, or where there has been a prevailing mistrust of the counting officials.

The public must perceive that there are adequate procedures in place to resolve disputes about voting and counting prior to the announcement of the final results. Thus transparency in the vote count and public confidence in the accuracy of the final vote tabulation are important for public confidence in the overall election. The high potential for trouble means that planning for the vote count is essential in gaining trust from the general public in the whole electoral process.

To control administrative errors during the vote count, it is necessary to put in place as efficient and transparent a process as possible. This requires advance planning. It is necessary to break down the process and talk about each step and to discuss ways to reduce the risk of error during each part of the vote counting process.

When asked if participants would like to see ballot boxes moved from the polling station to another point for counting, the overwhelming response was negative. When counting is done at the local level, results can be announced sooner which helps enhance public confidence. Counting at the local level also provides a system of checks and balances through pollwatchers who represent the different political contestants, domestic and international monitors and election administrators.

A further argument in favor of vote counting at the local level is that it promotes participation of the electorate by bringing the electoral process "closer to home", making the process tangible to voters. Additionally, participants believed that ballots were more secure if counted at the local level because it decreases the likelihood of fraud in transporting the ballot boxes. Lastly, participants cited numerous logistical constraints to transporting ballot boxes, including the need



*Casselia Stewart (Liberia)*

for reliable vehicles, transporting boxes in the dark and the lack of safety.

This led to a discussion of the rationale behind the laws requiring boxes to be moved in the first place. Reasons cited ranged from the availability of better lighting in non-rural areas to the possibility of integrating the transported votes into a bigger counting pool, thereby avoiding the potential intimidation factor of the identities of those who voted for each party becoming known in the circumstances of the smaller, more localized count.

Procedures available to challenge either the voting or the initial count and how those procedures affect the plan for releasing the final results were also discussed. The in-built tension between the public's desire for a quick tabulation and the need for due process for handling election challenges was acknowledged. Certain procedures have to be followed when doing the vote count. Election officials must think of what kind of audit trail there is in case a recount is needed. One participant revealed that in his country ballot boxes are kept secure for a year after they have been counted. Most participants accepted that recourse procedures were adequate for handling challenges and recount demands and other complaints.

Mike Carroll brought up the question of transportation. Whether it is decided to mix and move ballots or count at stations and move tally sheets, there is always a problem. As a commission, who decides how information is transported? Perceptions are important so it is important that the procedure chosen is well planned and transparent enough to allay misgivings among the skeptical.

Discussion turned to how electoral officials count ballots in different countries. The concept of a parallel vote tabulation (PVT) as another means of increasing public confidence in the vote count and the final results was also examined. Pat Merloe explained that a PVT is not an opinion poll but a tabulation of actual counting results based on a carefully drawn random statistical sample to ensure an accurate picture of the overall results. PVTs can be conducted by non-partisan NGO monitors or others. It was generally agreed that a PVT is acceptable if it broadly represents the electorate. However, the professionalism of administering the count is essential to both its credibility and its accuracy. In this regard, training for PVT administrators should be given priority.



*Ashiek Manie (South Africa)*

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## **THE ROLE OF ELECTION OBSERVATION**

*The role of election observation in building voter confidence in the fairness and efficacy of the electoral process was assessed from the international perspective by Horacio Boneo, Director of the United Nations Electoral Assistance Division. Then, Professor Tessa Bakary of Laval University, Quebec, Canada, and Grace Githu, Executive Director, the Institute for Education and Democracy, Kenya, reviewed strategies for strengthening domestic electoral monitoring capacities. Finally, Taofiki Aminou, GERDDES-Afrique, outlined his NGO's experience of election monitoring by Africans collaborating within an inter-regional NGO framework.*

### **International Observation of Elections**

The ultimate aim of international election observation is to enhance the internal and international credibility of the electoral process by issuing impartial and informed opinions about its freedom and fairness, assuming there is consistent positive evidence to support such conclusions. If all goes well, little difficulty is presented in pronouncing an election free and fair. If there are major problems in several dimensions, the contrary can be argued just as easily. The difficulty arises when there is evidence of some degree of manipulation in several dimensions of the process.

What would be the qualification of an electoral process where constituencies are found to be a very different size, with a clear trend to have smaller constituencies in areas favorable to the incumbent; where there are more resources devoted to registration in some areas than in others; when alliances are prohibited or hindered; where there is significant bias in the use of public resources, including public media; or when the electoral campaign is kept too short for the opposition to organize effectively?

Guidelines and criteria for monitoring and observing elections include what and how to observe as well as the use of relevant evaluative comparisons. A good observation methodology requires adequate functional, chronological and geographical coverage. Observation should ensure adequate coverage of the electoral process in all its key dimensions and not just the events of election day proper. Also, coverage should be geographically diverse since alleged irregularities or acts of intimidation at regional or local level can be distorted when viewed only from the perspective of the capital.

Relevant criteria are essential for evaluation. Comparing electoral processes in roughly similar countries can be helpful provided the information on the country used for comparison is adequate. In other instances, relevant standards may have been developed from prior observation or from other existent criteria. However, the most relevant comparison is invariably with past experience, where available.

#### **Different approaches, different trends**

United Nations full-coverage missions for large-scale operations such as Nicaragua, Haiti, El Salvador, Angola, South Africa and Mozambique deploy significant numbers of long-term observers to vantage points throughout the country

from early on in the electoral process. These observers are charged with monitoring the registration and campaign phases in addition to the actual elections. Their numbers are significantly increased during the intense few weeks surrounding the actual polling dates to ensure adequate coverage. Despite the more significant role played by the initial group, mission "size" tends to be defined by the larger number deployed in this last stage.

A permanent presence is useful, but not essential for adequate chronological coverage. Many international organizations opt instead to send teams periodically for short visits to review development of the electoral process. A concomitant risk with this approach is that the information retrieved can be subject to urban bias, and thin on rural coverage. An advantage of the long-term presence characteristic of large-scale UN observation, is that it facilitates the establishment of links with local organizations and individuals.

A disturbing trend and a questionable use of resources involves the practice known as "electoral tourism." This applies to those observer delegations which arrive a few days before the election date, attend the final political campaign rallies, conduct a few select interviews, and, then depart the country before the vote counting has even been completed. Given their inevitable dependence on second or third hand sources of information, the factual basis for such statements as these delegations might issue tends to be very weak.

Also distressing is the pressure exerted on the United Nations and other international organizations to send in large numbers of observers on election day. The rationale appears to be that the larger the number the better the observation and the greater the legitimacy. In South Africa and Mozambique, observer numbers peaked at 1,800 and 2,400 respectively.

Such numbers impose a huge strain on mission resources. The logistical strain of dealing with such a large influx in the immediate weeks before elections can be at the expense of time and energies better devoted to the needs of other more pressing and relevant aspects of the electoral observation process.

Two basic approaches have been used in determining international observation of election day events. One is the Namibian approach, where one observer or more was assigned to each polling site. This was possible in Namibia, given the available resources and the small number of polling sites (365). In the majority of cases, the number of polling sites is much higher — 2,500 in Mozambique, over 90,000 in Mexico — precluding a Namibian-style coverage. Instead, the norm is to deploy mobile teams that visit an average of 15 polling stations, and derive much of their electoral information from thorough questioning of the polling staff, the party agents or national observers present at each polling site.

As a result, the presence of incumbent and opposition party agents plus impartial national observers at each polling station has become an essential element to be factored into assessing the effectiveness of international observation. A limited amount of international support can help local NGOs to sustain such a presence. In Mozambique, where the cost of each international observer was close to \$6,000, an innovative program intended to support local observers was able to field 32,000 observers at a total cost of about \$1,500,000.

The importance of observation is the contribution it makes to the credibility and, therefore, the legitimacy of an electoral process. This is internally important because legitimacy in a democracy is directly related to the credibility of the elections. Also, it is externally important because in the post-Cold War world, donor

disbursements are increasingly predicated on human rights criteria and the role of competitive elections as an essential step in the construction of pluralistic and open societies.

## **Domestic Monitoring and the Transition to Democracy**

More than ever, post-authoritarian elections in Africa require the presence of international observers. Yet, building the capacity of African societies to monitor their own elections is essential to the process of consolidating democracy on the continent. A comparison of recent elections in which the international community was very involved (Malawi, Burundi), somewhat involved (Niger, Mali) or involved on a limited basis (Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon) shows that although international assistance played a decisive role, none of the countries concerned seemed ready as yet to organize elections without outside help.

### **Local Civic Organizations (LCOs)**

A survey of various local civic organizations (LCOs) suggests that their level of development and exposure to transitional elections has been limited. Yet the growth of LCOs in Zambia, Kenya, Togo, Ghana or Benin clearly indicates the potential is there.

LCOs serve to bring together a large number of citizens representing a diverse cross-section of their respective societies. They are not dependent on an ethnic or regional base. They encourage popular participation among the masses. They are an effective means of re-socializing, re-politicizing, and reconciling individuals, social groups, and associations with politics and democracy. They also serve to inculcate democratic values and practices in local cultures.

While LCOs should be encouraged and strengthened, a number of problems have to be overcome, the chief of which is the ideological/cultural issue. Establishing a nonpartisan LCO can be difficult, given the extreme personalization and polarization of the political arena in Africa. In addition, there is the legacy of authoritarian governments which enacted laws limiting or forbidding associations from engaging in political activity. Despite the official restoration of political and civic liberties, it is still difficult, even illegal, for LCOs to engage in the political process.

The ultimate objective of programs that support democracy through electoral assistance should be the creation of African equivalents of the organizations responsible for the colloquium (i.e. AAI, IFES, NDI). This requires increasing both the resources and the capacity of selected LCOs so that they can broaden the support base for democratic elections and undertake all-phase electoral monitoring. Organizations with proven track records include Nigeria's Campaign for Democracy, GERDDES-Afrique in Western and Central Africa, Burundi's ITEKA, PAC/PACGEM in Malawi and NEMU in Kenya.



*A Workshop in Session*

## A Case Study for Kenya

The quest of the early 1990s for a return to democracy in African countries was characterized by peoples' demands for respect for the rule of law, observance of human rights, and calls for national conferences and general elections. In Kenya the main call was for the repeal of an amendment to the country's constitution which outlawed all political parties except the ruling party, the Kenya African National Union (KANU). At the forefront of this struggle for change were legal and human rights organizations, church groups, and a number of other professionals. Having decided to monitor the 1992 multi-party general elections, the groups joined together under the name National Election Monitoring Unit (NEMU). NEMU's main goals were to:

- monitor elections, ensure they were free to all, note all electoral malpractices;
- educate the electorate on their rights and the implication of their votes in a multi-party political system;
- build up expertise in the monitoring of elections;
- play a mediating role during the handing over of power;
- liaise with the Electoral Commission.

To ensure credibility, NEMU officials maintained a policy of strict neutrality with respect to the politics of the day. When it came to issuing its final pronouncement on the elections, it did so through a Council of Elders it had appointed for the purpose.

Despite its efforts to establish regular contact with the Electoral Commission, it took many months before NEMU received official accreditation, something international observers generally acquired without delay or problem. The presence of international observers did give domestic monitors some needed political space, infusing the electorate with greater confidence that electoral malpractices, intimidation and violence would be minimal. NEMU also relied on the international community's support to help fund its election monitoring project.

Afterwards, NEMU concluded that multi-party elections did not translate into democracy and that opposition MPs were not much different from ruling party MPs. In preparing for the next election, NEMU is already at work on a plan of action to further the democratization process, including civic education, a more efficient monitoring system and better training methodologies, programs for strengthening civic institutions, and networking at national, regional and continental levels.

## Inter-Regional Monitoring

In 1991, GERDES formed an inter-regional organization enabling Africans themselves to become directly involved in monitoring elections. The first electoral monitoring mission comprised representatives from several African coun-



*Grace Githu (Kenya)*



tries who observed the legislative elections in Benin in February 1991. Next, GERDDES was responsible for logistical aspects of an electoral observation mission covering elections in the Central African Republic. GERDDES has since covered several more elections.

In GERDDES' experience, African election monitors face resource constraints and often encounter difficulties when trying to gain access to particular countries or in acquiring observer accreditation.

The growth of international observation efforts by Africans should be encouraged because it serves to increase awareness and knowledge of electoral matters among Africans themselves while involving them directly in the process of democratization. Over the years, GERDDES has benefited a great deal from its collaborations with international organizations involved in electoral observation and acknowledges their support.

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## **ELECTION OBSERVATION SCENARIO**

*Participants divided into three working groups to role-play a hypothetical election day situation. As leaders of the non-partisan "Kayemba League for Democracy" monitoring group, each group had to prepare and issue a statement on the legitimacy of the national presidential elections. With 20% of the vote counted two days after the polls closed, the incumbent President leads with 51% of the vote, according to the Ministry of the Interior which administered the elections. Two main opposition candidates trail with 35% and 10% of the vote respectively. Votes from the major opposition candidate's home province have yet to be counted. There are problems with voter lists. If no candidate receives over 50%, a run-off will be required.*

Spokespersons for two of the groups said that with only 20% of the vote counted, it is too early to make a formal statement. According to one group, the votes counted so far do not include the rural vote which forms the majority of the electorate. The other group, while refraining from issuing a formal announcement, urged the political parties to remain calm and await the final results.

Irregularities have occurred, the third group acknowledged, but it is too early in the count to presume bias in favor of any one of the parties. There should be dialogue between the parties and the electoral authorities. There should also be an independent election commission and an all-inclusive registry for future elections.

Asked whether the reported irregularities would have any effect on the 20% of the votes already counted, the group spokespersons replied that they did want to pre-judge the process. With 51% of the counted vote already going to the incumbent, one group said it felt that not to issue a statement might trigger "other consequences."

As to the effect of irregularities on the legitimacy of the process, all the groups said they stood by the process. At this early stage, it was more important to be supportive, to foster a spirit of cooperation and dialogue. One spokesperson

characterized his group as having adopted a “developmental approach” in offering recommendations for improved election regulating mechanisms.

The spokespersons’ responses stimulated a lively debate about the connotations of “free and fair” elections including the importance of separating fact from allegation. Some participants pointed out that while irregularities exist, the situation may not warrant criticism. One participant argued that the perception that a situation is not free and fair is as important as the facts and figures of a situation.

The overall exercise served to underline the importance of trying to develop and ensure a balanced statement before going public, said one participant. However, some argued that more could have been accomplished by dividing the working groups into distinct groups of election administrators, NGOs and political party representatives. This would have created a whole new dynamic.

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### **Strengthening Electoral Institutions and Defining a Post-Election Role and Structure for Electoral Commissions and Authorities**

*NDI’s Ned McMahon and Patrick Merloe addressed issues and raised questions while leading a discussion about the role of election administration in the post-election period.*

There was general agreement that a permanent election commission is important and necessary given the tremendous responsibilities that are part of the electoral process. Permanence is also necessary because elections are ongoing, with by-elections, municipal and local elections occurring in the periods between national elections. A permanent commission can be cost-effective too because it helps save money and time needed to create a new commission and new programs. In this regard, civic education programs should be long term.

Most participants also concurred that the election commission should be independent. However, there was much debate over the extent of its powers. Issues raised included whether a commission should have executive or supervisory power and what this power means in terms of legislative functions and interpretations of the law.

Another much discussed aspect concerned the chronology of national elections. Preparedness of the electoral law, party codes of conduct, the constitution, are all important factors to take into consideration when deciding the order of elections.

Participants identified tasks that an election commission should undertake between elections. These included updating voter registry, conducting civic and voter education, addressing legal and other electoral reforms, training staff members, and improving and maintaining equipment and centralizing an information book. Everyone agreed that the commission must address lessons learned and institute appropriate changes within the process of election administration.

## CREATION OF AN ASSOCIATION OF AFRICAN ELECTION ADMINISTRATORS

*In proposing the establishment of an association, Dr. Amare Tekle, former Commissioner of the Eritrean Referendum Commission, noted that when he was appointed to head his country's electoral commission he had no prior experience of electoral systems or processes. Looking around for advice, he could not find any relevant African organization that could help him. Other colloquium participants exposed to the recent winds of democratic change had shared this frustration.*

Elections are an essential component of Africa's new revolution of democratization. Creation of an African Association of Election Administrators is timely, especially given the external assistance picture and the growing need for self-reliance. While the association's nature, status, and membership can be determined through further consultations, the need for credibility demands that it be completely independent from the outset.

Such an organization can:

- promote the independence and impartiality of electoral commissions;
- act as a purchasing consortium;
- facilitate sharing experiences, information technologies, and, hopefully, resources;
- be a documentation centre for relevant literature, governmental and academic;
- facilitate the preparation of manuals, training kits and voter education material;
- help in the organization of observers;
- promote research to improve and simplify election laws and processes.

Jeff Fischer, Chief of Staff of IFES, said the Association of Central and Eastern European Election Officials (ACEEEO) could serve as a useful model for a potential African association because of the linguistic and cultural diversity of its membership.

Established in Budapest in 1991, ACEEEO comprises a network of institutions, NGOs and academia, committed to promote the professionalism of election administration in their respective countries. While funding has been a problem, a semi-permanent secretariat operates in Budapest. ACEEEO has had the benefit of some seed money from USAID, the Hungarian Government and the Mott Foundation. Its next meeting, to be held in Kiev, will be the largest to date, with several of the former Soviet republics having expressed interest.



*L-R, Raphael Mhone (Malawi) and*

*David Bandawe (Malawi)*

### **Working Group Mandated**

The plenary adopted the proposal to appoint Dr. Tekle to head a small committee and authorized him to select three or four members from among the participants — making sure they were regionally as well as gender representative.

This working group is to prepare a study, to be completed within six months, and report back by mail. Comparative data based on associations in Latin America and Eastern Europe, and the association of English administrators, is to be included. The completed study is expected to help determine the direction to take and whether another meeting should be held to actually create an association of African electoral administrators.

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## **FINAL DISCUSSIONS AND CLOSURE OF COLLOQUIUM**

*Participants reviewed the colloquium, offering comments and insights on the workshop and plenary sessions, and made some suggestions for consideration at a future meeting.*

The colloquium achieved most of the goals its organizers had hoped for, bringing together the people who make elections happen so that they could share professional and personal experiences and lay the basis for an informal network, Steve McDonald, Executive Vice President, AAI, told participants.

The decision to create a working group to look into the feasibility of forming an association of election administrators was a major initiative. The organizers would now seek a small operational grant to assist the group's chairman accomplish his task.

Mr. McDonald invited the plenary to continue discussions on strengthening electoral institutions and defining post-election roles and structures for those engaged in the work of democratization. He asked participants to start from the premise of setting the agenda for a follow-up colloquium a year or so hence.

One agenda item would be the formation of an association of election administrators. Other items should be framed in the context of future needs, reflecting the immense change and growth in the understanding and application of democratic governance in Africa. How, for example, would the coming years change the continent's needs and the ways in which the international community might assist? How could dwindling resources be best leveraged and applied?

### **Responses and comments**

Participants were unanimous in their appreciation of the learning and sharing experience afforded them by the colloquium. The workshops were described variously as "very informative", "educational", "a growing experience". Learning through sharing was particularly beneficial. Some complained of the lack of plenary time, a problem which arose because of early difficulties with the arrangements for simultaneous interpretation.

Many spoke of putting the lessons learned to practical use on their return home. Several participants expressed the hope that these lessons could be disseminated more widely. One participant wondered just how possible it would be to get the message out to electoral commissions and parties working in electoral

processes and by what means. An NGO representative suggested using newsletters, press conferences and, where feasible, local workshops.

Most welcomed the proposed association of election administrators as a much needed resource and a sign of progress. One participant stressed the importance of the association being gender representative, urged that it take into account the concerns and needs of the marginalized. Another said that the association would enable Africans to share the knowledge of the resources to tap when it came to electoral administration.

A participant made the point that while general principles learned in workshops were fine, each country had its own specific needs. He had already applied the lessons learned to the upcoming elections in his own country. Inspired by the "Kayemba" scenario, he had co-opted his workshop colleagues to use their morning session to examine his country's impending electoral organization situation and needs.

Looking to an agenda for a future colloquium, a number of participants cited concerns and omissions they would like to see addressed. Said one electoral official, there is still a long way to go to convince governments and citizens about the importance of understanding democracy, creating democrats, and explaining the reasons why they should participate in elections. True, civic education can play a vital role in this area but it is often viewed in the broader context of human rights, and feared as such in some countries for its potentially "liberalizing effect".

According to one electoral commissioner, not enough had been said about the main object of free and fair elections — "the development of democracy in our countries". He had hoped that more time would have been devoted to methods of assisting political parties and groups to observe democratic principles and their development as an element in deepening democracy.

For example, more needed go be said about the role of a free press in furthering the democratic process. Similarly, an exchange of views on the role of the military in this process, including the link between security considerations and the need for periodic elections and the trade-offs required would be useful. These were all issues worth focusing on at greater length in the future. The colloquium had broken new ground in stressing the importance of NGOs in the electoral process.

An OAU representative suggested that his organization should be more closely involved in organizing the next colloquium. He reminded participants that in 1990 and 1993 the OAU had adopted declarations endorsing the democratic transition in Africa. The OAU, he said, looks forward to continuing its positive work with the UN, AAI, NDI, and IFES. Its own experiences of electoral observation in Africa had been positive and it would continue to closely follow electoral processes throughout the region.

An electoral administrator urged the organizers to invite more parliamentary and governmental representatives to any future sessions. Most countries needed to change relevant legislation with regard to the democratic process. Since electoral administrators depend on governments for finances and for the independence of their electoral commissions, the participation of more legislators might help strengthen interaction between government, judiciary and electoral institutions.

At this point, the colloquium was declared adjourned.



*Steve McDonald (AAI)*



# AFRICAN ELECTION ADMINISTRATORS COLLOQUIUM

## *Sponsoring Organizations:*

The African-American Institute (AAI)  
International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES)  
National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI)  
United Nations Electoral Assistance Division (UN-EAD)  
United Nations Development Support & Management Services (DDSMS)

Elephant Hills Hotel  
Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe  
15-18 November 1994

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## **A G E N D A**

### **Monday - 14 November**

Arrivals and Hotel Check-in

2:00 - 8:00 pm

Colloquium Registration

### **Tuesday - 15 November**

9:00 - 10:00 am

*Opening Ceremony*

*Chair and Introduction*

Horacio Boneo  
Director of Electoral Assistance Division  
United Nations

*Keynote Address*

Andre Milongo  
President  
Assemblée Nationale, Congo

*Welcoming Remarks*

Steve McDonald  
Executive Vice President  
The African-American Institute

Jeff Fischer  
Chief of Staff  
International Foundation for Electoral Systems

10:30 am - 12:00 noon First Plenary

### **Overview of the Democratization Process**

*The challenges inherent in establishing a democratic political system including opportunities and constraints to consolidating the democratization process in Africa and the importance of building viable electoral institutions for the long term.*

Chair: Steven McDonald  
Executive Vice President  
AAI

Keynote: James Jonah  
Chairman  
Interim National Electoral Commission  
Sierra Leone

Presenters: Joel Barkan  
Professor, University of Iowa  
  
Guy Martin  
Professor, Clark-Atlanta University

Organizations responsible: UN and AAI

12:00 noon - 1:30 pm Lunch Break

1:30 - 2:45 pm Workshops:

### **Comparative Electoral Systems**

*Basic types of electoral systems, including advantages/disadvantages and functional requirements; principles of representation; societal and political factors in selecting an electoral system; African experiences with electoral systems.*

Chair: Joel Barkan, Professor  
University of Iowa

Facilitators: John Makumbe  
Professor, University of Zimbabwe

Michael Krennerich  
Institute of Political Science  
Heidelberg University

Organization responsible: UN-EAD

### **Organizational Structure of Electoral Systems**

*Planning and managing the electoral process including organizational structures of election commissions; essential roles and functions of election administrators; financial implications of election system design; and the positive effects of a well-managed election system on the political environment.*



Facilitators: Joe Baxter  
Chief Technical Advisor  
IFES/Ghana

Tom Bayer  
Senior Program Officer, Africa & the Near East  
IFES

Organization responsible: UN

### **Electoral Operations in a Democratic System**

*This workshop will discuss the relationship between free and open elections and a democratic system, where characteristics such as pluralism, decentralization, popular participation, and respect for human rights and the rule of law are important. It will also emphasize the importance of outreach on the part of election administrators to political parties and civil society. This outreach and dialogue with civic groups and parties should encourage participation and consensus building; transparency; timely distribution of pertinent information; encourage citizen monitoring of the electoral process; promote effective voter education programs; and facilitate the processing of electoral complaints.*

Facilitators: Gabriel Murillo  
Chairman, Department of Political Science  
Universidad de Los Andes  
Bogota, Colombia

Patrick Merloe  
Senior Associate for Election Processes  
NDI

Organization responsible: IFES and NDI

3:00 - 4:15 pm

Workshops Continued

### **Electoral Operations in a Democratic System**

#### **Comparative Electoral Systems**

#### **Organizational Structure of Electoral Systems**

#### **Organizational Structure of Electoral Systems**

#### **Electoral Operations in a Democratic Systems**

#### **Comparative Electoral Systems**

6:00 - 7:30 pm

Reception

**Wednesday - 16 November**

8:45 - 9:30 am

Second Plenary

**Computerization and Electoral Administration**

*Computers have the potential of increasing the efficiency and economy of election operations. The presentation made in this plenary session will discuss the benefits and risks of computerizing elements of electoral administration. The speaker will describe the primary areas of application for computerization: voters lists, voting results, logistics and supply management, and election financing.*

Presenter: Harry Neufeld  
Management Consultant

Organization responsible: IFES

9:45 - 11:15 am

Workshops:

**Civic and Voter Education**

*Education of the electorate is essential for elections to be meaningful. This is a large task in many nations where literacy is low and the means of disseminating information are limited. This workshop will discuss various aspects of civic and voter education, including message development, use of the media, training methodologies, voter education in the context of broader democracy education, resource utilization, government role vs. NGO role, timing and funding. Samples of voter education material will be demonstrated.*

Facilitators: Carl Larkin  
Programme Officer  
NDI, South Africa

Revd. Fr. John Maviiri  
Public Relations Officer  
Joint Christian Council of Uganda

Organizations responsible: AAI and NDI

**Training of Electoral Officers**

*This workshop examines the components of a training program for electoral officers. This includes training regional officers, registration officers, and polling station officers. The workshop will focus on creating an efficient division of labor within the body administering the election for pre-election, election day and post-election duties, and on training the officers responsible for the component tasks.*

Facilitators: Amare Tekle  
Commissioner  
Eritrea Referendum Commission

Stephen Akabway  
Commissioner  
Constituent Assembly Commission

Organization responsible: AAI

### **Electoral Campaigns and Pre-election Issues**

*This workshop examines the pre-requisites for free and fair campaigns. Issues to be discussed include control of state resources, media access and coverage, campaign financing, candidate selection, impediments to campaigning, party codes of conduct, complaints and dispute resolution. The "level playing field" concept is at the core of this workshop.*

Facilitator: Patrick Merloe  
Senior Associate for Election Processes  
NDI

Organization responsible: NDI

### **Voter Registration and Computerization**

*This workshop will focus on voter registration issues and the use of computers to facilitate the production and updating of voters registers. It will allow for a more in-depth discussion on the implications of applying information technology introduced in the plenary session on Computerizing Electoral Administration.*

Facilitator: Harry Neufeld  
Management Consultant

Organization responsible: IFES

11:30 am - 1:00 pm

Workshops Continued

**Voter Registration and Computerization**

**Civic and Voter Education**

**Training of Electoral Officers**

**Electoral Campaigns and Pre-election Issues**

1:00 - 2:30 pm

Lunch

2:30 - 4:00 pm

Workshops Continued

**Electoral Campaigns and Pre-election Issues**

**Voter Registration and Computerization**

**Civic and Voter Education**

**Training of Electoral Officers**

4:15 - 5:45 pm

Workshops Continued

**Training of Electoral Officers**

## **Electoral Campaigns and Pre-election Issues**

### **Voter Registration and Computerization**

### **Civic and Voter Education**

**Thursday - 17 November**

8:45 - 10:00 am

Third Plenary

#### **Election Day Case Studies**

*Two case studies will be presented. One case will represent a successful election, another an election that lacked legitimacy. Themes leading to the success and failure of the latter will be analyzed. These include: method of election administration, level of preparation for the election, involvement of the civil society in facilitating election processes and the ability of monitors to properly assess election administration and post-election administration and post-election dispute resolution.*

Presenters: *Dominican Republic*  
Patrick Merloe  
Senior Associate for Election Processes  
NDI

*Niger*  
Adamou Kombo  
Former President  
Supervisory Electoral Commission

Organization responsible: NDI

10:15 - 11:30 am

Workshops

#### **Logistics of Election Day**

*Contingency planning, communications and security concerns are some of the issues that will be discussed in this workshop focussing on election day activities from the perspective of electoral administrators. Participants will be able to discuss the lessons they have learned from their own experiences in organizing for smooth operations on election day.*

Facilitators: Jeff Fischer  
Chief of Staff  
IFES

Joe Baxter  
Chief Technical Adviser  
IFES/Ghana

Thomas Bayer  
Senior Program Officer, Africa & Near East  
IFES

Bruno Soares  
Chief Technical Adviser  
UNDP Electoral Assistance Project in  
Mozambique

Organization responsible: IFES

### **Vote Tabulation and Complaint Resolution**

*The workshop addresses issues related to the vote tabulation process, from the polling place or local counting station up to the national level. Emphasis is placed on the importance of transparency at each stage of the process. Discussion will also include the utility of parallel vote tabulation, a method by which nonpartisan domestic monitors perform an independent representative sample of polling places. Resolution of complaints prior to the official proclamation of results is also discussed.*

Facilitators: Michael Carroll  
Program Officer  
AAI

Patrick Merloe  
Senior Associate for Election Processes  
NDI

Ned McMahon  
Senior Programme Officer  
NDI

Organization responsible: AAI

11:45 am - 1:00 pm

Workshops Continued

### **Vote Tabulation and Complaint Resolution**

### **Logistics of Election Day**

1:00 - 2:30 pm

Lunch

2:30 - 4:00 pm

Fourth Plenary

### **The Role of Election Observation**

*Assessment of the role of election observation in building voter confidence in the fairness and efficacy of the electoral process; including strategies for strengthening domestic electoral monitoring capabilities as an essential part of the democratic process.*

Chair: Ned McMahon  
Director of East and West Africa Programmes  
NDI

**1. International Observation of Elections:**  
An overview of the Present Situation

Presenters: Horacio Boneo  
Director, Electoral Assistance Division  
United Nations

Taofiki Aminou  
Secrétaire General  
GERDDES - Elections

**2. Domestic Monitoring and the Transition to Democracy**

Presenters: Tessy Bakary  
Professor, Laval University  
Quebec, Canada

Grace Githu  
Executive Director  
Institute for Education and Democracy  
Nairobi, Kenya

Organization responsible: UN

4:00 - 5:00 pm

Four Simultaneous Workshops On:

**Election Observation Scenario**

*In this workshop a hypothetical election day situation will be introduced. Participants will role-play election observers and be required to draft observer delegation statements.*

Organization responsible: NDI

5:00 - 5:45 pm

Fifth Plenary

**Report Back on Election Observation Workshops**

6:00 - 6:45 pm

Sixth Plenary

**Creation of an Association of African Election Administrators**

**Friday - 18 November**

8:45 - 10:00 am

Four Simultaneous Workshops On:

**Strengthening Electoral Institutions and Defining a Post-election Role and Structure for Electoral Commissions and Authorities**

Organizations responsible: IFES, AAI, NDI, UN

*10:15 - 12:30 am*

Seventh Plenary

**Final Discussion and Closing Ceremonies**

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## S p o n s o r s

Many of the colloquium's inputs were provided by the Colloquium's sponsors: three U.S. based non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and two divisions of the United Nations. The three NGOs were the African-American Institute (AAI), the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), and the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI). The UN sponsors were the Electoral Assistance Division (UN-EAD) and the Department for Development Support and Management Services (UN-DDSMS).

The **African-American Institute** is a private voluntary non-governmental organization that was founded in 1953 to foster development in Africa. AAI has organized seminars, conferences, workshops, publications and forums on all aspects of democratic institution building. AAI, its officials, staff and country representatives have participated in and organized civic education and election monitoring efforts in Zimbabwe, Madagascar, Kenya South Africa, Haiti, Jamaica, Benin, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Namibia, Djibouti, Zambia, Congo, Ghana and Angola. AAI has active representation in 24 African countries.

The **International Foundation for Electoral Systems** is a private non-profit election research foundation. IFES also provides technical assistance to countries in a variety of areas including electoral administration, election law, electoral bodies, voter registration, pollworker training, election equipment design and procurement, voter education, and electoral procedures. IFES has successfully organized similar regional electoral meetings in Latin America and Central Europe. These meetings have resulted in the creation of regional associations of election officials. IFES has worked closely with the United Nations in providing electoral assistance in Angola, Haiti and Malawi.

The **National Democratic Institute for International Affairs** was established in 1983. By working with political parties and other institutions, NDI seeks to promote, maintain and strengthen democratic institutions in new and emerging democracies. The Institute is headquartered in Washington, D.C., and has a staff of 120 with field offices in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Eastern Europe, Latin America, the Middle East and the former Soviet Union. NDI has supported the development of democratic institutions in more than 60 countries. Programmes focus on six major areas: political party training, election processes, civic organization, strengthening legislatures, local government and civil military relations. In the area of election process, NDI provides technical assistance for political parties, nonpartisan associations and election authorities to conduct voter and civic education campaigns and to organize election monitoring programme

The **United Nations Electoral Assistance Division** works under the Focal Point for Electoral Assistance, Mr. Marrack Goulding, Under-Secretary-General, Department of Political Affairs, in providing technical and advisory assistance to Member States. Major activities include: evaluating government requests for



electoral assistance, conducting needs assessment missions, designing electoral assistance projects, and developing operational strategies for large-scale electoral assistance missions. EAD also provides frequent support to international observers; co-ordinates assistance among donor countries and UN system agencies; maintains a roster of electoral experts; organizes conferences and training courses; and serves as the UN's institutional memory in the electoral assistance field.

The **United Nations Department for Development Support and Management Services (DDSMS)** provides technical assistance to developing countries and countries in transition in the broad field of integrated development and public management. The Division of Public Administration and Development Management (DPADM) is responsible for the United Nations programme in public administration and finance. Since 1989, it has been providing technical assistance to national electoral authorities in organizing free and fair elections. Areas of electoral assistance include legal advice to electoral authorities; organization of registration processes; establishment, maintenance and computerization of permanent civil electoral rolls; strengthening the electoral institutions; civic and voter education; logistics and organization of elections. The Department works very closely with the Electoral Assistance Division of the Department of Political Affairs and collaborates with national and international non-governmental organizations.

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## Papers Presented

The following is a select list of papers prepared for the Colloquium that are available, upon request, from the designated organization.

<b>Author</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Contact</b>
Barkan, Joel	African Elections in Comparative Perspective	UN
Baxter, Joe	Techniques to Effective Election Management	UN
Carroll, Michael	Vote Tabulation and Complaint Resolution	AAI
Githu, Grace	The Domestic Monitoring of Elections in Africa: A Case Study for Kenya	UN
Martin, Guy	Democratization and Governance in Africa	AAI
Merloe, Patrick	Electoral Campaigns and Pre-Election Issues: The "Level Playing Field" and Genuine Elections	NDI
Merloe, Patrick	Electoral Operations, Human Rights and Public Confidence in a Democratic System	NDI
Murillo, Gabriel	Electoral Operations in a Democratic System	IFES
Neufeld, Harry	Computerizing Electoral Administration	IFES

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