

ASIAN MONITORING NETWORK CONFERENCE

**Cambodian Election Monitoring Organizations
Lessons Learned and Future Directions**

**October 1-2, 1998
Phnom Penh, Cambodia**

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report is based on a conference organized by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) in Phnom Penh, Cambodia on October 1 and 2, 1998. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) provided funding for this conference and the publication of this report as part of NDI's Asian Monitoring Network Program.

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NDI would like to thank the six international participants in the October 1998 conference: Tarikul Ghani, Executive Director of the Fair Election Monitoring Alliance (FEMA) in Bangladesh; Damaso Magbual, Deputy Secretary General of the National Citizens Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL) in the Philippines; Evelyn Serrano, co-founder of the Bangkok-based Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL); Kapil Shrestha, President of the Human Rights Organization of Nepal (HURON); Somchai Srisutthiyakorn, Executive Director of the Pollwatch Foundation in Thailand; Pann Yuanlaie, Regional Coordinator for the Pollwatch Foundation in Thailand.

Finally, NDI would like to thank the participants from the three Cambodian monitoring groups, the Coalition for Free and Fair Elections (COFFEL), the Committee for Free and Fair Elections (COMFREL) and the Neutral Independent Committee for Fair Elections in Cambodia (NICFEC). Without the diligent preparation and enthusiastic participation of these three groups, the conference would not have been a success.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On October 1 and 2, 1998, NDI held a conference in Phnom Penh, Cambodia that brought together 36 activists from eight Asian election monitoring organizations (EMOs). NDI organized this conference as part of its Asian Monitoring Network (AMN) program, through which the Institute encourages the exchange of materials, expertise and other resources among Asian EMOs.

The majority of conference participants came from Cambodia's three domestic monitoring coalitions: the Coalition for Free and Fair Elections (COFFEL), the Committee for Free and Fair Elections (COMFREL) and the Neutral Independent Committee for Free Elections (NICFEC). Each group sent 10 representatives to the conference, half of whom were provincial coordinators. International representatives from EMOs in Bangladesh, Nepal, the Philippines and Thailand participated in the conference and shared their monitoring experiences with the Cambodian activists.

The conference had three main objectives: (1) to review and discuss the activities, accomplishments and organizational processes of the three Cambodian domestic monitoring organizations; (2) to assist the three groups to develop concrete plans for future activities, drawing on the experiences of other Asian EMOs; and (3) to strengthen through practice the AMN process by demonstrating an exchange of information, materials and experiences among groups in Asia.

On the first day, the Cambodian groups discussed how they planned and implemented activities, reviewed their accomplishments, provided self-assessments of their activities and suggested lessons that could be applied to future programs or the efforts of EMOs elsewhere. Using the Cambodian groups' experiences as a case study, representatives from other Asian EMOs made observations and suggestions of how domestic monitoring groups can meet the challenges they face. Participants drew a number of lessons from these sessions:

- **Reporting.** In a country where information about the election process is not freely or widely available, domestic monitoring organizations may be one of the only sources of credible information about the election process. It is thus critical that groups systematically and impartially assess the election process and report their findings publicly.
- **Accuracy.** Groups, as one participant noted, must remember "accurate data is our main weapon" and base their assessments firmly on documented observations and factual evidence.
- **Assessment.** It is important for monitoring groups to evaluate the entire election process, not just events during balloting or the vote count. Additionally, EMOs must consider the political context in which an election takes place when evaluating the process.
- **Communication.** To gather information successfully, an EMO's communication system must be quick and accurate, and a group's central office must communicate with its nationwide branches frequently and consistently.

- ***Handling Violence and Intimidation.*** If an EMO is aware that political conditions may threaten observers, it must prepare its observers to operate effectively in a hostile climate, as well as actively lobby authorities to address the political environment.
- ***Neutrality.*** A group must be aware of how voters and parties perceive it and its work and, even if it considers itself to be neutral, should cultivate a nonpartisan public image in order to establish and maintain credibility.
- ***Women's Participation.*** As a means of overcoming societal and cultural barriers that may prevent women from participating in monitoring efforts, EMOs should specifically target women for training that would provide them with the skills needed to participate in monitoring activities and politics more generally.
- ***Funding.*** It is important for EMOs to diversify their funding bases, particularly for groups that receive the bulk of funding from international donor organizations.
- ***Interaction with Other Groups and Institutions.*** To ensure credible polls, domestic monitoring organizations must interact with competing parties and institutions involved in the election process, as well as with international observer groups monitoring the process.

On the second day, participants addressed the challenges ahead of COFFEL, COMFREL and NICFEC, as a case study of how EMOs can approach strategic planning. The day opened with discussion of issues EMOs should consider when planning post-election activities, activities other Asian EMOs have conducted between elections and how the post-election environment in Cambodia could affect the work of the country's monitoring groups.

The three Cambodian EMOs all saw several obstacles to conducting future programs. The political environment had continued to deteriorate since the July polls and civic groups faced the prospect of diminishing political space in which to work. The groups were confident that they better understood how to prepare a large-scale monitoring effort and general monitoring techniques. They recognized, however, that they must plan more strategically and develop programs in a more timely fashion for future work to be successful.

Among the potential post-election activities discussed in these sessions were:

- popular education on democracy, elections and the constitution;
- monitoring commune-level elections (which may be held as early as 1999) and the development of a framework for these polls;
- monitoring the actions of elected political officials;
- research and publication on election-related issues;

- conducting periodic public meetings on issues related to elections and democratic reform;
- advocating for democratic reform among lawmakers; and
- developing the leadership and management skills of EMO members through internal training.

In the planning exercises, the Cambodian groups and international participants drafted documents that outlined strategies for developing these programs. In the small groups, participants discussed the goals of proposed activities and the time and resources needed to organize the programs suggested.

Finally, participants shared thoughts on challenges facing EMO activists in the region and suggestions of how Asian monitoring organizations could better support each other in the future:

- Asian EMOs must take their cues from states and businesses and seek to affect change through multilateral efforts. To accomplish this, domestic monitoring groups need a regional vehicle through which to speak.
- Monitoring groups must guard against elections becoming “procedural and minimalist” exercises and can more effectively uphold standards for democratic elections by speaking in unison through a regional body.
- A major challenge ahead of Asian EMOs is to provide grassroots workers with the skills and resources necessary to perform their tasks successfully. To meet this challenge, participants encouraged the continued development of an EMO network that could facilitate efforts to train volunteers throughout the region and through which activists could share information and ideas with as many colleagues as possible.
- Participants agreed that the conference was a much-needed opportunity for Asian democracy activists to demonstrate moral support for each other’s efforts. As one participant noted, it helped her gain “more confidence, more courage and more inspiration” for her own efforts.

In sum, the conference demonstrated the benefits of regional interaction among monitoring groups. It provided Asian EMO activists an opportunity to consider the recent experiences of COFFEL, COMFREL and NICFEC as a domestic monitoring case study. Many challenges that Cambodian participants discussed at the conference, such as establishing public credibility, securing funding and, in particular, monitoring in a hostile political environment, are pertinent to EMOs everywhere. The program was also a chance for Asian activists to assist the Cambodian groups in their efforts to evaluate past activities and develop future plans, tasks that COFFEL, COMFREL and NICFEC successfully completed during the conference. Participants reiterated the need for Asian EMOs to work on a regional level and expressed their eagerness to continue beyond this conference to exchange thoughts and ideas about strengthening the role of domestic monitoring groups in Asia.

I. INTRODUCTION

On October 1 and 2, 1998, NDI held a conference in Phnom Penh, Cambodia that brought together 36 activists from eight Asian election monitoring organizations. NDI organized this conference as part of its Asian Monitoring Network program, through which the Institute encourages the exchange of materials, expertise and other resources among Asian EMOs.

The majority of conference participants came from Cambodia's three domestic monitoring coalitions: the Coalition for Free and Fair Elections, the Committee for Free and Fair Elections and the Neutral Independent Committee for Free Elections. Each group sent 10 representatives to the conference, half of whom were provincial coordinators. International representatives from EMOs in Bangladesh, Nepal, the Philippines and Thailand participated in the conference and shared their monitoring experiences with the Cambodian activists.

This conference took place at a critical time in the lives of the Cambodian EMOs, which conducted their first monitoring efforts for the July 26, 1998 parliamentary elections. The Cambodian organizations played an important role in the July elections. They recruited nearly 20,000 election day observers and monitored voter registration, the campaign period, balloting, counting and the post-election environment under difficult circumstances.

At the time of the conference, the three groups were completing written assessments of the 1998 election process and were in a position to evaluate their own monitoring performances and to consider future plans, including whether to conduct activities in the post-election period. The political environment after the elections, however, was marred by violence, intimidation and the failure of the leading parties to resolve election-related disputes and form a government on the basis of poll results. In this context, the conference offered an opportunity for the three groups to evaluate jointly the political climate and consider its possible effects on conducting future programs.

The conference also provided other Asian EMO activists an opportunity to consider the recent experiences of the Cambodian groups as a domestic monitoring case study. Many challenges that Cambodian participants discussed at the conference, such as establishing public credibility, securing funding and, in particular, monitoring in a hostile political environment, are pertinent to EMOs everywhere.

As part of their preparation for the conference, COFFEL, COMFREL and NICFEC drafted papers on several topics addressed during the program. The groups also completed written assessments of their monitoring activities in which they listed conclusions or lessons learned based on their work. (See Appendices I and II.) This report incorporates both the discussion among participants during the conference workshops and presentations and the reports and self-assessments written by the Cambodian EMOs. In addition, the groups produced several strategic planning documents during the conference, including charts of organizational strengths and weaknesses, lists of challenges and opportunities ahead of the organizations and written plans for developing and implementing future activities. (See appendices III and IV.)

II. BUILDING A NETWORK OF ASIAN EMOs

Importance of Domestic Monitoring

Domestic election monitoring by nonpartisan groups contributes to a more genuine election process by encouraging fair campaign practices and an informed electorate. The primary purpose of domestic monitoring groups is to safeguard the integrity of the election process. Through their efforts, EMOs reduce the possibility of fraud and irregularities before, during and after election day and encourage public confidence in the process.

In addition, domestic monitoring encourages citizens to become actively involved in politics and can develop and strengthen institutions essential to the sustainability of a democratic political system. Monitoring efforts help citizens to learn organizational skills necessary to participate actively and effectively in the political life of a country between elections. Some groups formed to monitor elections have developed into broader-based civic organizations, contributing to the development of civil society. Others continued to monitor the performance of elected officials and process of electoral reform, contributing to more open and transparent governance. These activities, in turn, have enhanced the prospects for greater political discourse, increased citizen involvement in politics and heightened public confidence in government.

Domestic Monitoring in Asia

When the National Citizens Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL) monitored the Philippines' pivotal elections in 1986, it demonstrated the critical role of domestic monitoring in guaranteeing the integrity of an election process. Since then, domestic monitoring has taken place throughout Asia and has played a critical role in ensuring democratic elections worldwide.

The region has changed significantly since NAMFREL's pioneer domestic monitoring program. Several countries in Asia, including Bangladesh, the Philippines, South Korea, Taiwan and Thailand, have developed more open and democratic political systems. In Indonesia, the desire for political reform ended the 32-year reign of President Soeharto; in Malaysia, a demand for political change now threatens the Mahathir government that has held power for the past 17 years. To many, Asia's recent economic collapse has highlighted the critical need to encourage more open, transparent and democratic political processes in the region.

At the same time, autocratic regimes continue to wield power in many Asian countries and threats to democratic development in the region remain strong. Cambodia in particular has experienced serious setbacks to establishing the rule of law and a government accountable through democratic elections.

In this context, it is increasingly important for domestic monitoring groups to influence the course of Asia's political development by making their voices heard amid other domestic political actors and international organizations and by establishing themselves as alternative centers of political

power. Domestic monitoring groups have historically been at the forefront of democratic reform movements. As forces opposed to democracy become more sophisticated in their efforts to manipulate the electoral process, Asian monitoring groups can make important contributions to democratization in the region by upholding standards for democratic elections and providing technical and moral support to like-minded activists in other countries.

NDI's Asian Monitoring Network Program

In conjunction with NAMFREL, NDI organized a conference in Manila in 1995 on domestic monitoring. This program brought together representatives from 29 civic organizations in 11 Asian countries to share their experiences and begin to develop a common, regional agenda. Drawing on conference discussions, NDI wrote *Making Every Vote Count: Domestic Election Monitoring in Asia*, a report that addressed the recent experiences and strategies of election monitoring organizations throughout Asia. This conference contributed to the creation of new EMOs in several countries, including Cambodia and Indonesia, and helped to strengthen an informal network of EMOs throughout the region.

Building on the success of the Manila conference and on the Institute's work with Asian monitoring groups since the mid-1980s, NDI launched the Asian Monitoring Network program in 1997. Through the exchange of materials, expertise and other resources among Asian domestic monitoring organizations, this project seeks to establish long-lasting relationships among EMOs in the region.

Among other activities, NDI has initiated a series of study missions through which representatives from Asian EMOs participate in election monitoring activities elsewhere in the region, observe the activities of local monitoring groups, and share experiences and materials related to monitoring and other election-related activities. Through activities such as the recent program in Phnom Penh, this project provides an opportunity for Asian EMOs to coordinate their efforts and to provide support to democracy activists throughout the region.

As part of the AMN project, NDI organized a study mission to the May 1998 national and local elections in the Philippines. The program facilitated an exchange of information among representatives from EMOs in Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines and Sri Lanka. Participants led discussions on election-related activities in their countries and compared approaches to domestic election monitoring. They met with national election observers to learn about local strategies for monitoring, voter education and volunteer recruitment. On election day, they monitored the polls alongside local observers and later shared their observations with representatives of domestic civic organizations in the Philippines.

NDI and the Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (Forum-Asia) are coordinating to create a permanent regional election monitoring network center in Bangkok that will serve as a resource and research tool for democratic activists throughout the region. This AMN center will build a library of valuable resources and materials and will include an internet website that will contain electronic materials from Asian EMOs. The library will include the latest information on upcoming election monitoring efforts in Asia as well as training manuals, reports and literature on domestic election monitoring. The website will be a networking vehicle and information clearinghouse through which subscribers will be able to share ideas, materials and expertise as well as access to other groups' statements, reports and contact lists.

EMOs Participating in the Conference

The October 1998 conference in Phnom Penh brought together representatives from eight Asian EMOs, including three Cambodian groups, domestic monitoring groups from Bangladesh, Nepal, the Philippines and Thailand, and one regional monitoring organization based in Bangkok. (See Appendix V.)

The **Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL)** was founded in 1997 by Forum-Asia, in conjunction with other nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) throughout South and Southeast Asia. Forum-Asia itself is a network of NGOs that promote human rights and social development in the region. The group established ANFREL as a regional effort to monitor the rights of Asians to freely change their governments through democratic elections. Evelyn Serrano, one of the group's founders, represented ANFREL at the conference.

In 1998, ANFREL concentrated its efforts on Cambodia and sent four fact-finding missions to the country to assess all phases of the election process. In 1999, the group will likely focus on the election processes in Indonesia, Nepal and Thailand. In addition to its monitoring efforts, ANFREL trains local groups to educate and mobilize voters. The group conducts research on election-related issues and is currently organizing a comparative study of election laws in Asia. ANFREL plans to launch a directory of EMOs in the region as part of the AMN center in Bangkok.

Building on domestic election monitoring efforts in Bangladesh since 1990, the **Fair Election Monitoring Alliance (FEMA)** was formed in 1995 as a coalition of more than 180 civic organizations. FEMA mobilized 30,000 monitors for the June the 1996 national elections. Since 1996, the alliance has monitored by-elections and local elections throughout the country and advocated for election law reform. Tarikul Ghani, the group's Executive Director, represented FEMA at the conference.

The **National Citizens Movement for Free Elections** was organized in the Philippines in 1983 to promote clean elections and honesty in government. NAMFREL is an umbrella organization comprising more than 100 NGOs, religious organizations, labor groups and professional associations. Since the 1984 polls, the group has observed more than 10 electoral exercises in the Philippines and has sent observers and resource trainers to more than 15 countries. Between elections, NAMFREL monitors congressional activities, encourages citizen participation in politics and advocates for electoral reform. Damaso Magbual, NAMFREL's Deputy Secretary General, represented the group at the conference.

The **National Election Observation Committee (NEOC)** formed in 1991 as an umbrella organization under which Nepal's human rights organizations came together to monitor that year's general elections. Five coalition members went on to observe local and by-elections after 1991 and these member groups reinstated NEOC in preparation for national elections in 1994. Between elections, NEOC members conduct activities that promote good governance in Nepal. Kapil Shrestha, President of NEOC member group Human Rights Organization of Nepal (HURON), represented the alliance at the conference.

In 1992, the then-caretaker government in Thailand established the **Pollwatch Foundation** to monitor that year's national elections. Though financially supported by the government, Pollwatch operated independently and established a credible voice as a neutral monitoring body. Under the provisions of the 1997 Thai constitution, the foundation became a financially independent, nongovernmental organization. Pollwatch is currently preparing its monitoring effort for national elections expected in 1999. Executive Director Somchai Srisutthiyakorn and Regional Coordinator Pann Yuanlaie represented Pollwatch at the conference.

Since the UN-administered elections in 1993, more than 120 civic organizations have emerged in Cambodia. Many of these groups conducted election-related activities that year as part of the UN's monitoring and voter education efforts and continued to operate after the election process was completed. In 1996, two coalitions formed to conduct domestic monitoring activities: the **Coalition for Free and Fair Elections** and the **Committee for Free and Fair Elections**. COFFEL and COMFREL have conducted civic and voter activities and monitored the 1998 national elections. These coalitions include a range of human rights, social development and research organizations as member groups.

In the spring of 1998, a third coalition, the **Neutral and Independent Committee for Fair Elections in Cambodia**, formed to conduct voter education and domestic monitoring. NICFEC, which had conducted voter education programs during the 1993 elections, is primarily composed of students and is loosely affiliated with Licadho, one of the country's leading human rights organizations.

III. CONFERENCE GOALS AND METHODOLOGY

The October 1998 AMN conference had three main objectives: (1) to review and discuss the activities, accomplishments and organizational processes of the three Cambodian domestic monitoring organizations; (2) to assist the three groups to develop concrete plans for future activities, drawing on the experiences of other Asian EMOs; and (3) to strengthen through practice the AMN process by demonstrating an exchange of information, materials and experiences among groups from around the region. Keith Jennings, NDI Director of Programs to Promote Civic Participation, served as moderator for the conference. (See Appendix VI.)

To achieve these objectives, the conference proceeded from a general discussion about opportunities for regional interaction to a review of the 1998 domestic monitoring effort in Cambodia and post-election issues facing the Cambodian groups. In this way, participants used the Cambodian experience as a case study for assessing and refining approaches to domestic monitoring and for considering ways to support democratic activists in Asia through regional coordination and network-building. In addition, participants considered the conference an important chance to demonstrate solidarity and mutual support for monitoring groups and activists throughout the region.

The conference methodology included presentations by EMO representatives on monitoring-related topics, open discussion among all participants, working group sessions in which conference participants collectively undertook a series of organizational evaluation and planning exercises, and written evaluations that participants completed individually. Throughout the program, NDI encouraged as much open discussion and exchange of information and ideas as possible. Time was set aside during each session for participants to share their comments and thoughts on the topics addressed.

The conference opened with a general discussion of opportunities for regional networking, led by Evelyn Serrano of ANFREL and Sarah Malm, NDI Senior Program Officer. This discussion was followed by four sessions that focused on the experiences of the Cambodian monitoring groups during the 1998 election process. The first was a general overview of the Cambodian groups' monitoring experiences, including how the three separate coalitions coordinated their efforts. All three Cambodian EMOs gave a presentation during this session.

The next three sessions focused on specific sets of issues that EMOs face: (1) finance, administrative structure and communication; (2) volunteer recruitment and training; and (3) reporting and assessment. Each Cambodian group gave a presentation during one of these sessions, and they each prepared papers on all three topics. These sessions offered a chance for participants to identify lessons learned from the recent experiences of the Cambodian groups. The international participants commented on each of the presentations, responded to direct questions and provided practical information based on their own experiences.

The second day of the conference focused on strategic planning. The day commenced with a discussion of the post-election environment and its implications for monitoring activities. Participants then divided into smaller groups of 10 representatives from each Cambodian EMO and two international representatives. Using a set of planning exercises, the three groups first developed

lists of their organization's strengths and weaknesses and of the opportunities and challenges facing their groups. The groups then considered approaches to strategic planning and how to take their organizational assessments into account when developing their plans for the future.

Finally, participants reviewed challenges facing domestic monitoring groups in Asia, gave comments about the conference and made recommendations for future AMN program activities. NDI distributed a list of contact information for all participants at the program, so they could remain in touch after the conference and continue to share advice and information about election monitoring.

In addition, NDI held numerous meetings with each of the three Cambodian groups before and after the conference. In the pre-conference meetings, the Institute discussed the objectives of and agenda for the conference and assisted the Cambodian EMOs to prepare their presentations and discussion papers for the program. After the conference, NDI met again with each group and reviewed the strategic planning documents that they drafted during the conference.

IV. CAMBODIAN DOMESTIC MONITORING EFFORTS IN 1998

For several months after the July 1997 coup, a climate of intimidation restricted the EMOs' efforts to conduct programs and activities. However, by early 1998 COFFEL, COMFREL and NICFEC resumed their efforts to recruit and train volunteer monitors and to establish networks to collect and analyze information on the election process from across the country.

Voter Education

All three coalitions conducted voter education activities during the 1998 election process.

NICFEC organized public performances to encourage citizens to register to vote and participate in the elections. The group adapted traditional plays and stories to discuss issues and themes related to the different phases of the election process. NICFEC concentrated on Cambodia's 10 most populous provinces and the Phnom Penh municipality, which contain more than 82 percent of all voters. NICFEC organized 250 volunteer actors and musicians to give performances throughout the country. The group assigned one troop of actors, speakers and musicians to each province to facilitate its voter education activities.

COMFREL coordinated its voter education efforts through offices in each province, which were responsible for distributing election-related materials and information and for developing partnerships with local NGOs to encourage their participation in voter education efforts. One member of the coalition's secretariat in Phnom Penh was responsible for coordinating the group's

voter education activities nationwide. COFFEL educated citizens about the polls by producing pamphlets, posters, booklets, cartoons and radio and television advertisements about the election process.

Monitoring Activities

COFFEL and COMFREL monitored the entire election process, including voter registration, the campaign period, balloting, the vote count and the resolution of election-related complaints. The two groups also monitored the development of the electoral framework and provided input toward the development of election regulations, such as codes of conduct for political parties and observers.

NICFEC, which coalesced later in the election process, observed election day and continued to monitor the process during the post-election period.

Voter registration was conducted from May 18 to June 15. During this period, COFFEL and COMFREL released a series of statements evaluating the voter registration process. Although technical aspects of registration proceeded fairly well, these reports noted incidents of intimidation and threats that colored the process. COMFREL released a subsequent statement in early July reporting that threats and intimidation by certain party and government officials limited the ability of opposition parties to campaign.

On election day, the three coalitions in total deployed 20,000 volunteers, enough to witness proceedings nearly all polling stations. COFFEL employed mobile monitoring teams while COMFREL, which sought to deploy one observer to every polling station in the country, employed stationary monitors. NICFEC deployed more than 2,000 stationary observers and 172 mobile observers—including a number of foreign expatriates living in the country.

COMFREL also conducted a parallel vote tabulation (PVT) in an effort to provide an independent source polling results with which to verify the official count. In a PVT, election monitors record the results obtained from individual voting stations and compare these findings with official results (unlike exit polling that surveys voters as they leave a polling site, a PVT relies on the actual figures reported by poll station officials). This allows an EMO to verify the accuracy of the results announced by electoral authorities.

EMOs frequently choose between two types of PVTs: a *quick count* that relies on random sampling and statistics to project the outcome based on results from a limited number of voting sites, and a *comprehensive* effort that collects and tabulates the results from all or nearly all of the voting sites. The former approach allows a group to obtain accurate, credible results quickly and in most circumstances meets the needs of an EMO. The latter method is more complete and necessarily slower, and is used when only a comprehensive voting-site count will suffice to convince the electorate of the true poll results.

COMFREL made a strategic decision not to take a statistical sample needed to conduct a quick count. Instead, the group collected official results from as many counting sites as possible and

released a preliminary report of its PVT figures on July 28. The group ultimately received figures from enough data points to project poll results that were considered representative. COFFEL's figures later corresponded with the preliminary vote count that the National Election Commission (NEC) released on August 5. COFFEL also collected data for a parallel vote count but did not complete the exercise by processing the information it gathered.

The coalitions adopted different strategies for analyzing observations and reports that came in from their observers throughout the country. COFFEL sampled reports at random to ascertain a national picture of election day and the first day of the vote count. The group later tried to synthesize reports from polling stations where notable irregularities occurred—about three percent of the sites it observed. COMFREL focused its attention on reports from specific areas in which its monitors noted particularly high levels of irregularities, as well as from a control group of sites where its observers noted few problems.

All three groups released preliminary statements after polling day: COFFEL released statements on July 26, 28 and 30, COMFREL on July 27, 28 and August 1 and NICFEC on July 31. In these statements, the groups noted that balloting had proceeded fairly smoothly and that the atmosphere on election day was generally peaceful. The groups also reported that the vote count was largely transparent and problems associated with the count were isolated. They encouraged election authorities to investigate parties' complaints regarding balloting and the count and encouraged parties to rely on the grievance process in place to resolve their election-related disputes.

All three groups emphasized, though, that these were preliminary assessments and that they would not make a final assessment of the election process until after the grievance process was completed. In its July 28 statement, COFFEL stated that contrary to reports on state-run radio, it had not declared the elections "free and fair" in its first preliminary statement. NICFEC noted in its July 31 statement that the "large-scale of intimidation and violence" during the pre-election period had "left an impact on the election itself" and thus "the process must not be judged only on the basis of events of the polling and counting days."

COFFEL, COMFREL and NICFEC continued to monitor the election process and political environment after polling day. All three observed vote recounts that were held in certain districts. COMFREL also conducted an independent investigation of election-related complaints leveled by competing candidates and parties. The three groups offered to assist the NEC and the Constitutional Council to investigate complaints, though the bodies did not accept this offer. COFFEL released a mid-August statement on the grievance process. In this statement, the group called for the election commission to investigate election-related complaints more thoroughly. In late August, the three coalitions issued a joint statement that condemned a grenade attack in front of the National Assembly and reiterated the need for promoting a peaceful political atmosphere and safeguarding civil rights.

V. SELF-ASSESSMENTS AND LESSONS LEARNED

For the first day of sessions, NDI asked the Cambodian groups to discuss the process by which they planned and implemented activities, to review their accomplishments, to provide a self-assessment of their activities and to suggest lessons that could be applied to future programs or the efforts of EMOs elsewhere. The three groups completed written evaluations of their monitoring activities during the first day of the conference. Using the Cambodian groups' experiences as a case study, representatives from other Asian EMOs made observations and suggestions of how domestic monitoring groups can meet the challenges they face.

Assessing the Election Process

In a country where information about the election process is not freely or widely available, such as Cambodia, domestic monitoring organizations may be one of the only sources of credible information about the election process. It is thus critical that groups systematically and impartially assess the election process and report their findings publicly.

For a monitoring group, the most important factor in making a credible assessment is gathering accurate information about the process. In the words of one participant, domestic monitoring groups must remember that "accurate data is our main weapon" when making assessments of the election process. Groups must be sure that their evaluations are based firmly on documented observations and factual evidence for their assessments to have the greatest impact possible.

EMOs must monitor a range of factors that affect the election process. Participants concluded that the Cambodian EMOs needed to pay more attention to the development and enforcement of election regulations in their monitoring efforts. Although the Cambodian groups suggested in their written evaluations that they planned from the outset to consider these issues in their work, their accounts during conference sessions suggested they focused mostly on the provisions of the election law and less on its implementation through election regulations. The three groups recognized the importance of studying the implementation of election regulations and that such regulations warranted closer monitoring in any future efforts.

Participants also agreed that it was important for monitoring groups to evaluate the entire election process, not just events during balloting or the vote count. In the recent observation effort in Cambodia, not all observer groups considered the entire process in their public statements and assessments. For example, the largest international monitoring group, the UN-coordinated Joint International Observer Group (JIOG), issued its statement on the elections based solely on events of July 26 and 27. In the opinion of conference participants, this was premature and could not be considered credible without including an assessment of the vote count, the grievance processes and the installation of a new government based on results of the polls. These elements of the election process are often more telling of an election's validity than events on polling day.

Communications

In order to compile the accurate data needed to credibly assess an election process, an EMO must communicate effectively. To gather information successfully, an EMO's communication system must be quick and accurate, and a group's central office must communicate with its nationwide branches frequently and consistently. If its communication system falters or is slow, a monitoring group will not be able to receive and analyze data in a timely fashion. This will lessen the credibility and impact of its statements and reports.

COFFEL and COMFREL established similar communication structures. Monitors transmitted data and other observations to the commune office, which relayed the information to the district office. From there, data proceeded to the provincial office and then finally to the central office in Phnom Penh. At each level, information from several sources was consolidated before being sent to the next level. For example, a district office would have compiled reports received from each commune-level office in its jurisdiction and sent one comprehensive report to the provincial office, the next level in the communications chain.

Despite their similar communication structures, COFFEL was not as successful at relaying information as COMFREL. Unlike COMFREL, which relied solely on its own phones and fax machines or those of its member organizations, COFFEL also communicated through privately owned telephones and fax machines, as well as the postal service. When reviewing its monitoring activities, COFFEL did not consider these lines of communication to be particularly effective. Reliance on private lines constrained the group's ability to receive information in a timely fashion, particularly during the vote count when its communication was irregular and the necessary information did not come through properly. Breakdown in communication was also the main culprit in the group's unsuccessful PVT.

Participants suggested that given the difficulties it had experienced, COFFEL ought to consider using alternative means of communicating information. Tarikul Ghani suggested that the groups use couriers to transmit data, a tactic FEMA employed successfully in past observation exercises. NICFEC reported that in addition to phone and fax, it transmitted information by motorbike during the election period. These were offered as examples of how EMOs can solve communications problems through creative thinking.

Handling Violence and Intimidation

Threats, intimidation and violence were daunting challenges to the Cambodian observers during this year's election process. None of the groups suggested that their ability to release public statements was compromised by the political environment. They noted, though, that intimidation affected their ability to gather information on the process.

In particular, NICFEC reported that a number of its volunteers received threats, which somewhat colored the reports that it received from its observers. The group did not specifically suggest how much information was lost because observers did not feel confident to report their observations. Considering the threatening work environment, it is likely that the information on

which the group based its assessments was not complete.

Among lessons it drew from the experience, NICFEC recommended that observers learn how to work more secretly and learn how to protect themselves from potential harm. If an EMO is aware that political conditions may threaten observers, NICFEC suggested, it must prepare its observers to operate effectively in a hostile climate.

In contrast, COMFREL and COFFEL suggested EMOs should emphasize lobbying authorities to address the threatening climate. COMFREL, for example, reported that it organized meetings at which its volunteers discussed concerns about political conditions with party representatives, election officials and local authorities. According to one COMFREL member, this dialogue had a positive effect and decreased the level of violence during voter registration and the campaign period.

COFFEL suggested that in the future EMOs should more closely collaborate with the election commission and local authorities to encourage a peaceful atmosphere. These recommendations suggest EMOs must more actively engage authorities and encourage them to address threatening conditions. If such attempts fail, EMOs can also take more aggressive action. For example, COMFREL at one point publicly criticized a provincial governor for obstructing its efforts and threatening its observers. If local authorities are not taking appropriate and timely measures to ensure that EMOs can freely operate, such a direct response is warranted.

Neutrality

Domestic monitoring groups worldwide must make concerted efforts to establish and maintain a nonpartisan image in the eyes of the public, a challenge that all three Cambodian EMOs noted during the conference. A partisan image would have done great damage to the groups' credibility, particularly given the tense and divisive political climate that surrounded the election process. To address this concern, the groups monitored their own activities and, in some cases, drafted regulations which would ensure the neutrality of volunteers. COFFEL described this process as "self-monitoring before monitoring others."

Several participants observed that EMOs do not need to limit volunteers' political activity strictly to ensure nonpartisanship. For example, in its internal regulations NICFEC does not restrict volunteers from supporting any of the parties. To maintain credibility as a nonpartisan organization, the group simply stipulates that its officials and volunteers could not use the organization for the purpose of supporting any political party.

In an effort to build credibility as a neutral organization, FEMA requests that its volunteers sign a pledge that they will not support or work against any candidates or parties. In doing so, FEMA reaffirms its commitment to nonpartisan work among its volunteers and project a nonpartisan public image. A volunteer who violates the pledge would be asked to leave the group.

The discussion on neutrality revealed that public perception is critical to the credibility of a domestic monitoring group. A group must be aware of how voters and parties perceive them and their work and, even if it considers itself to be clearly nonpartisan, should cultivate its public image in order to establish and maintain credibility. The three Cambodian groups were highly successful in this regard and were never seriously accused of being biased.

Volunteer Recruitment and Training

The importance that EMOs place on maintaining neutrality can influence approaches to recruiting volunteers. NICFEC leader Hang Puthea noted that because that group's by-laws dictate that observers must be impartial, the group recruits its volunteers from among other civic groups which have members who would likely fit this criteria.

NICFEC also reported that because it trained its observers in advance, they should have received the necessary information to carry out their tasks. Still, some did not have a clear sense of their duties. And, though it recruited a good number of volunteer to monitor election day, the group also suggested that it depended primarily on a small core group of active members and had difficulty expanding its pool of volunteers.

Identifying volunteers is a challenge for many domestic monitoring groups. To increase its number of potential volunteers, Pollwatch has initiated a program called the People's Network, or P-NET. The P-NET will bring together local and regional NGOs and associations, creating a larger pool of potential volunteers for Pollwatch's programs. The network will also provide administrative support to Pollwatch for volunteer training and implementation of monitoring activities.

In a sense, this approach is similar to the way the Cambodian monitoring coalitions operated. COFFEL, COMFREL and NICFEC drew their volunteers from member organizations and provincial networks, and frequently relied on member groups' organizational infrastructures to implement coalition activities. Though Pollwatch does not have member organizations, the P-NET project will formalize the arrangement between the monitoring group and other Thai NGOs, making it easier for Pollwatch to contact, recruit, train and deploy prospective observers.

For this year's polls, COFFEL, COMFREL and NICFEC provided a small amount of money to volunteers for food or transportation expenses associated with their work. Several conference participants thought that this compensation complicated their efforts to recruit and retain volunteers. NICFEC reported that its observers expected to receive a higher level of compensation than the group could provide (the group gave its volunteers 10,000 Riel, or \$2.50 US, each as meal money during their work on July 26 and 27) and complained if other monitors received more money than they did. Some of the group's volunteers alleged that the organization had embezzled money that otherwise would have gone to observers. Others thought that observer work was a long-term job. COFFEL noted that it did not have sufficient funds to provide compensation to as many observers as the group would have liked to recruit. Several volunteers left the group before election day and the group was not able to field observers throughout the country.

Compensation raised problems for the groups in part because each monitoring coalition provided a different amount to its volunteers. This created some competition among the groups for volunteers and led to complaints from volunteers that one organization was treating their observers more favorably than another. If groups consider it necessary to compensate observers in the future, participants suggested, they should coordinate such that volunteers from each organization receive the same compensation. Participants also suggested that in the future they try to instill a greater spirit of volunteerism in observers so that they are less concerned about receiving compensation for their monitoring work.

Women's Participation

During the session on organizational structure, the discussion turned to the role of women in domestic monitoring efforts. Only seven of the 30 Cambodian participants at the conference were women, which prompted Evelyn Serrano of ANFREL to ask whether women were adequately represented at all organizational levels in the three groups.

Several female participants from the Cambodian EMOs responded to this question and agreed that women were not adequately represented among either the management or cadre of volunteers. They suggested, though, that the organizations recognize the importance of addressing the issue. NICFEC has set a target of having women make up 50 percent of the organization (900 of the group's approximately 2,600 observers for the recent elections were women) and COMFREL has given a directive to its local offices to recruit and employ more women.

Cambodian participants noted there exist societal and cultural barriers to women's participation in monitoring efforts. For example, many families, especially in rural areas, place a lower premium on education for daughters than for sons. Women generally do not enjoy the same access to education as men, which is perceived as a limit to their involvement in public affairs, including election monitoring. Though formal education is not necessarily a prerequisite for civic or political activity, participants reported that lack of schooling decreases women's opportunity to develop skills valuable for participation in EMO activities.

One way EMOs can remedy this inequity is to target women for training that would provide them with the skills needed to participate in monitoring activities and politics more generally. With the requisite training, one Cambodian participant speculated, women would be even stronger monitors or trainers than men. NDI further suggested that to create greater opportunities for women's participation, it may also be necessary for EMOs to confront existing norms that limit the roles women can play in society. This may mean overcoming cultural traditions, such as familial roles limiting women's access to education, that may not be conducive to the country's social and political development.

Funding

Identifying and securing funding for activities is a pressing concern for domestic monitoring

groups. This can be a time consuming process, more so than EMOs may initially realize. COFFEL reported that it had difficulty lobbying prospective donors to support its projects and that it took a longer time than expected to secure necessary funding. As a result, the group had less time to implement its project than it would have liked. Based on this experience, COFFEL identified several lessons learned for EMOs seeking funds: (1) to study the mandates of donor organizations more closely; (2) to seek funding from a wider array of sources; (3) to make the project objectives as clear as possible; and (4) to understand clearly the policies and restrictions for using funds.

The Cambodian EMOs, like many domestic monitoring groups around the world, receive the bulk of their funding from international donor organizations. Participants suggested that reliance on donor funding can be problematic. These funds are characteristically available at the time of elections but not between polls, which presents a challenge for groups that seek to conduct post-election activities. Furthermore, domestic monitoring groups that rely on donor funds often find it difficult to maintain control over their organization's agenda and the direction of their programs.

Like the Cambodian groups, FEMA receives most of its funding from international donor organizations. In order to maintain operations between elections, when donor money is typically unavailable, FEMA attempts to keep its overhead as low as possible. The group maintains only three full-time staff members between elections. The group also receives contributions from its members, partner organizations and selected corporate donors. Member organizations contribute in-kind donations, such as equipment or materials, to the alliance between elections. One group serves as FEMA's national secretariat, contributing manpower and office space. Participants noted the importance of these kinds of contributions and suggested that other EMOs emulate FEMA's model.

EMOs also need to seek sources of domestic funding to ensure their local authenticity. If a group is dependent entirely on international sponsors it leaves itself open to accusations of being a "foreign-propped" entity. Similarly, a group cannot rely on government funding lest its independence be called into question. Before the promulgation of a new constitution in 1997, Pollwatch received the bulk of its funding from the Thai government. Now, as an independent organization, the group must diversify its funding base to sustain activities and to ensure its independence from the government.

Participants agreed that diversification of funding is an important issue for all EMOs, particularly for groups that, like the Cambodian EMOs, receive the bulk of funding from international donor organizations. By diversifying its funding, an EMO can encourage other domestic constituencies to become stakeholders in the movement for free elections. NAMFREL, for example, has made a strong effort to raise funds from within the business community in the Philippines. Not only does this allow the group to diversify and strengthen its funding base, it helped NAMFREL to establish important links with the business community and reinforce the idea that democratic elections are in that community's best interest.

Finally, participants suggested EMOs should develop their entrepreneurial spirits and seek creative ways to raise funds for their activities. NICFEC volunteers, for example, create artwork and

handicrafts for the coalition to sell. The group then puts the profits toward NICFEC's election-related programs. In this way, the group maximizes its members' artistic skills to find an alternative source of income.

Coordination of Efforts Among Cambodian EMOs

COFFEL, COMFREL and NICFEC all concluded that closer coordination would have improved their activities. In particular, participants noted that the groups ought to have coordinated their deployment strategies such that each polling station would have at least one assigned domestic monitor. Although at most polling sites there were observers from more than one EMO, at a small number of sites there was none. A more coordinated deployment could have allowed domestic monitors to be present at even more sites, as the three coalitions recruited more observers (nearly 20,000) than there were polling stations (approximately 12,000).

The groups suggested that the time constraints in organizing their recent monitoring programs was the primary reason they did not work more cooperatively. International participants, however, suggested that domestic monitoring groups will always feel as though they face time constraints in their work, given the enormity of their tasks and the limited resources at their disposal. To overcome this challenge, EMOs must improve their coordination and initiate joint planning as early as possible. The international participants urged the three Cambodian groups to chart a joint course of action for post-election activities, which would help them to avoid similar time constraints in the future. In response, the groups pledged to meet on a monthly basis. At the end of the conference, one Cambodian participant also proposed a specific activity—monitoring the development of a framework for commune elections—around which the three EMOs could develop a joint plan of action and coordinate future efforts.

Interaction with Political Parties, the Election Commission and International Observers

To ensure a credible election process, domestic monitoring organizations must interact with competing political parties and institutions involved in the election process. Though they had some interaction with these groups, COFFEL, COMFREL and NICFEC could have been more active in their outreach to other groups. For example, one participant noted weaknesses in the techniques of party pollwatchers, which, he suggested, could have contributed to inaccuracies in the political parties' monitoring reports. Other participants pointed out that the EMOs could have had closer contact with the parties before the elections to learn about their efforts to train party agents. Had the domestic monitoring groups done this, they might have been able to provide parties helpful materials or suggestions.

NDI also suggested to the Cambodian EMOs that their interaction with international monitoring groups must be more direct and assertive. There was minimal interaction and communication between domestic and international observers (with the exception of IRI and NDI) during the election period. This was a major weakness of the groups' effort this year—had the domestic monitoring groups more actively engaged with international observers, they may have had

greater influence on international groups' assessments of the election process.

VI. DEVELOPING ACTION PLANS

On the second day of the conference, participants addressed the challenges ahead of COFFEL, COMFREL and NICFEC, as a case study of how EMOs can approach strategic planning. The day opened with discussion of issues EMOs should consider when planning post-election activities, activities other Asian EMOs have conducted between elections and how the post-election environment in Cambodia could affect the work of domestic monitoring groups.

EMO Activities Between Elections

Participants from the Asian EMOs noted several ways through which domestic monitoring groups can contribute to democratization between polls. Kapil Shrestha of NEOF advised that domestic monitoring organizations should identify the major challenges to democratization in the post-election period and address these challenges through their activities. In Nepal, for example, there is a general lack of transparency in politics. NEOF's activities between elections thus focus on encouraging an atmosphere of trust and accountability among citizens, elected officials and political parties.

NAMFREL's post-election projects all seek to contribute to more transparent elections, accountable governance and greater citizen participation in democratic politics. When considering potential post-election activities, the group is mindful of the importance of invigorating civil society and increasing its base of volunteers and supporters. It has thus developed programs that encourage citizens to play active roles in civic and political affairs between elections. NAMFREL's activities have included monitoring the performance and voting records of election officials; organizing public forums in which citizens and officials can interact; monitoring the progress of selected government projects; and advocating for electoral reforms, such as creating an automated voting system.

Like many EMOs that do not conduct activities between elections, Pollwatch has found it challenging to maintain contact with its volunteers since the last polls in 1996. To address this concern, several Pollwatch chapters in the southern part of Thailand established a regional center through which the group could maintain links with volunteers between elections. This center organizes meetings twice a year to discuss election-related developments and assists regional coordinators to plan their chapters' future activities. It also provides regional coordinators a chance to solicit public opinion and serves as a forum for discussion of civic issues. This is a potential model for other EMOs to use in their efforts to maintain links with volunteers member organizations between elections.

Strategic Planning Exercises

The three EMOs all saw several obstacles to conducting future programs. The political environment had continued to deteriorate since the July polls and civic groups faced the prospect of diminishing political space in which to work. The groups were confident that they better understood how to prepare a large-scale monitoring effort and general monitoring techniques. They recognized, however, that they must plan more strategically and develop programs in a more timely fashion for future work to be successful.

In the first of two strategic planning exercises, participants from each Cambodian coalition were asked to conduct a “SWOT Analysis” of their organization. In this brainstorming exercise, they generated a list of organizational **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities and **T**hreats that face their group. By the end of the exercise, the groups identified the characteristics of the internal and external environments in which they would conduct post-election activities. Two participants from the Asian EMOs worked with the Cambodian groups to develop these lists.

The first two categories, strengths and weaknesses, are internal elements that affect EMO planning. NICFEC and COFFEL both identified their human resources as an important strength, noting that their volunteers were capable and talented. At the same time, they agreed with COMFREL that many volunteers lacked technical expertise in election monitoring. NICFEC in particular considered its relatively small pool of observers as a weakness and identified a need to broaden its base of volunteers. All three groups saw their lack of financial stability as a major weakness. An important strength, though, was the support the groups had received from the Cambodian public and from other national and international organizations.

The opportunities and threats identified in the exercise represent external factors that groups must consider when planning activities. All three groups identified the political environment as a threat and noted that the space in which civic groups operate was becoming smaller. In the weeks after the July polls, human rights groups reported numerous incidents of threats and intimidation aimed at neutral observers. At the conference, the Cambodian EMOs worried that threats would continue to pose a grave challenge to their observers. They also expressed concern that the government may enact a new law governing NGOs that would strictly regulate EMO activities and limit their ability to receive funding from international donor organizations. Given this possibility, the groups considered their tenuous funding situations to be a major threat.

All three groups, though, saw opportunities ahead of them to develop their human resources and conduct activities in support of democratic elections. Though the low level of popular understanding about democracy and elections is a challenge to democratization, it presents EMOs an opportunity to engage citizens in politics and encourage participation through civic education. COFFEL noted opportunities for the group to communicate more regularly with political authorities and the international community in an effort to improve future election processes; NICFEC saw chances ahead to improve its ties to political parties and promote dialogue among competing parties.

In second exercise, in which they developed action plans for developing and implementing future programs, the groups considered how to take advantage of or overcome the elements identified through the SWOT Analysis. NDI proposed that EMOs use a six step approach to planning:

1. Environmental assessment: what are the problems that your group will try to solve?
2. Organizational assessment: what unique contribution can your group make?
3. Strategic goals: what are principal ends that your group will seek to reach?
4. Methodology: what approach will your group take to achieve its goals?
5. Identify objectives: what intermediate steps must your group take to reach its long-term goals?
6. Resource assessment: what human, financial and material resources will your group require?

The three groups discussed several potential post-election activities, including popular education on democracy, elections and the constitution; monitoring commune-level elections (which may be held as early as 1999) and the development of a framework for these polls; monitoring the actions of elected political officials; research and publication on election-related issues; conducting periodic public meetings on issues related to elections and democratic reform; and advocating for democratic reform among lawmakers. Additionally, participants from COMFREL proposed to develop its members' leadership and management skills through internal training activities. In order to evaluate the feasibility of these plans, Damaso Magbual of NAMFREL suggested the groups EMOs use the "SMART" method—assess whether proposed activities are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and have a discreet timeframe.

After completing the exercises the groups agreed that it was helpful to use such structured approaches to strategic planning exercises and felt more confident that they had thought through their plans for the future. Participants also appreciated the chance to discuss planning issues in smaller groups because it provided opportunities for each person to share their ideas and discuss future plans as a group. Though leaders of the three groups had already sketched out proposals for future work, at the end of the exercises participants agreed that it is important for an EMO to, when possible, discuss strategic planning as a group.

As the Cambodian participants considered model activities of other Asian groups and proposed their own program ideas, NDI provided several suggestions.

First, the EMOs need to develop a clear plan of action. In particular, this plan must identify obstacles that the groups will face—such as poor communication, lack of transportation, shortage of funding or a hostile political environment—and consider ways to overcome these obstacles.

Second, the groups need to make a clear decision—via a discrete decision-making process—about whether to conduct monitoring and civic or voter education activities simultaneously. It was not apparent that they had made an informed decision about carrying out these two very different activities during this year's election process. If they do plan to conduct both activities, or still other activities such as issue advocacy or community organizing, they must consider how they can tailor

their organizational structures and processes to suit a variety of projects.

Third, the groups ought to consider what structure their organizations should adopt in the future. If this vision is clear from the outset, they will be able to build suitable organizational structures while they conduct their activities.

VII. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

One point reiterated throughout the conference was the need for Asian EMOs to work on a regional level. As one participant noted, groups that fight for democracy should take their cues from states and businesses and seek to affect change through multilateral efforts. To accomplish this, domestic monitoring groups need a regional vehicle through which to speak. In this sense, the success of regional efforts such as the AMN or ANFREL will contribute to the successes of domestic monitors throughout Asia.

A second recurring theme was the important role of domestic monitoring groups in upholding international standards for democratic elections. Given the seeming contradiction between the marked flaws in the recent Cambodian election process and the “free and fair” judgment that some observer groups handed down, one participant emphasized that monitoring groups must guard against elections becoming “procedural and minimalist” exercises. Groups must assess an election based on all phases of the process and must consider the surrounding political environment as a fundamental part of that process. Again, one way EMOs can be more effective in upholding election standards is to speak in unison through a regional body.

Participants agreed that domestic monitoring groups can only succeed to the extent that they have a strong network of activists at the grassroots level capable of providing the necessary data with which EMOs make their assessments. A major challenge ahead of Asian EMOs, therefore, will be to provide grassroots workers with the skills and resources necessary to perform their jobs successfully. To meet this challenge, participants encouraged the continued development of an EMO network that could facilitate efforts to train volunteers throughout the region and through which activists could share information and ideas with as many colleagues as possible.

Finally, participants agreed that the October conference was a much-needed opportunity for Asian democracy activists to demonstrate moral support for each other’s efforts. Many activists at the conference spoke of the power of exchange with others who share their goals and ideals. As Evelyn Serrano noted, the meeting gave activists a chance to demonstrate critical support for each other’s work and to gain “more confidence, more courage and more inspiration” for their own efforts. By meeting representatives from other monitoring groups in Asia, participants gained appreciation that they were part of a larger movement of activists concerned with promoting democratic development across the region.

APPENDICES

Appendix I: Reports of 1998 domestic monitoring programs
prepared by COFFEL, COMFREL AND NICFEC

COFFEL

I. Review of Monitoring Activities

The 1993 National Assembly election was organized by the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC). The election scheduled for July 26, 1998 was organized by Cambodian citizens and supported by the international community. In these difficult circumstances, the COFFEL coalition, as well as other organizations based on independence and neutrality, actively participated to monitor the election process and vote count. We deployed approximately 6,983 volunteer observers at polling stations in 11 provinces, including Phnom Penh.

As the July 26 National Assembly election process finished, some problems involving the organization and responsibilities of the National Election Commission (NEC) remained, especially complaints by opposition parties which denied the election results and irregularities that occurred in voting and counting processes, and some other problems to be solved. These problems have proven to cause difficulty and conflict in forming a new government.

II. Finance and Structure

COFFEL was founded in 1995 after the conference on election systems and management organized by the Khmer Institute for Democracy in collaboration with the Ministry of Interior, funded by Konrad Adenauer Foundation.

COFFEL's purpose is to support, enhance and monitor free, fair, equal and accurate elections. COFFEL has 68 member organizations and associations based in other provinces of the Kingdom of Cambodia. These organizations and associations have their activities such as human rights, democracy, development research and women's affairs, etc.

These organization members had elected a Board of Directors composed of nine members with leading roles and experiences: President, Vice-President, General Secretary, Treasurer, Women's Affairs Committee, Voter Education Committee. These leading persons administer COFFEL. They help to implement project plans, develop proposals, manage staff and funding, and build networks with other national and international institutions.

COFFEL has two structures: national level and grassroots level based in 11 provinces. At the grassroots level we have organized a Provincial Committee, 11 Provincial Coordinators, 102 District Coordinators, 73 mobile trainers and about 6,983 volunteers to observe at 6,902 polling stations and 966 counting centers, including Phnom Penh. For communication, we used private telephone and fax or post office. This proved to be difficult and a big constraint to our work. On counting day especially we were late to obtain results as the communication system was irregular and had shortages. COFFEL, however, had organized its network to effectively obtain information such as data and information on irregularities.

COFFEL conducted such activities as monitoring the implementation of laws and conducting

voter education and election observation. COFFEL made reports and related statements which it forwarded to embassies, organizations, foundations, news agents and national and international organizations, particularly those institutions involved in the elections.

COFFEL has done this successfully as we had a strong structure and assistance from other NGOs such as the Asia Foundation, UNDP, Forum Syd and the Canadian Embassy in Cambodia.

But during the period of seeking assistance, we found difficulties in lobbying donors about our difficult works and we had a short time to implement this new project plan that our Cambodian people take active part in organizing the election process. We would like to raise some difficulties and lessons which COFFEL learned in seeking funds for its own activities:

- study the principle and purpose of donors
- seek more funding sources
- make the project plan clear
- identify the specific orientation of the project plan
- identify the boundaries of funds and policies for using funds

CONCLUSION: Though we met difficulties, COFFEL tried to make efforts to remain a bastion of neutrality and nonpartisanship, and to take part in organizing the election in a historic era of the Cambodian people.

III. Volunteer Recruitment and Training

As a result of the participation of COFFEL in its mission, it pushed the election process in Cambodia to go freely, justly, fairly, acceptably and successfully. Its recruitment procedure was based on defining accurate qualifications for volunteer observers and especially providing them with training in the areas that encouraged them to meaningfully participate in the election. The training was conducted properly and with valuable documents.

1. Recruitment

Naturally, when we want people to join as volunteers (with no reimbursement) in the election and want qualified people, recruitment is not easy.

In order to recruit volunteers, COFFEL had to find out an approach or strategy of “encouragement.” We made known our mission and objectives to people and also made known the honor and democratic society which comes from the participation of the people in every aspect of the elections, that this is “necessary and useful” for them and their society. In addition, we suggested that these work experiences would be beneficial to them in finding another job, and so on.

Promoting and encouraging volunteers took place through the law, as the NEC recognized the valuable roles and functions of observers and certified the effectiveness with which they worked with COFFEL.

In order to get volunteers to fulfill their job successfully and in a neutral manner, volunteer recruitment needed to define key work conditions, such as what the organization had done at the provincial and district levels. We also needed to define qualifications, such as being at least 18 years old with accommodations in the area for which they volunteered, having a secondary school certificate, capacity or appropriate experiences, being neutral, having a background in activism and interest in being a volunteer.

In order to make it future works easier, COFFEL took care to make list of volunteers' names and addresses to cooperate with them later.

2. Training

Qualified volunteers should be able to fulfill the works successfully--it is necessary for them to clearly know their roles and duties and what tasks there are to be taken. Toward this end, COFFEL carefully and attentively provided training to roughly 7,000 volunteers. The training focused on methodologies and the effectiveness of ongoing education to people on the roles and responsibilities of observers (as stated in the code of observers' conduct), techniques and approaches to monitoring, and observing the overall process of the election, such as voter registration, the election campaign and the vote count.

COFFEL authorized mobile trainers in each district to conduct this training by introducing and defining the education content.

We are, however, lacking in other areas, such as funding and communication system. This is why COFFEL faced some challenges in recruiting in certain few areas. We had difficulty finding volunteers because of communication problems and because of the lack of money needed for compensation. Some volunteers did not agree to work through election day, and in some places there were no volunteers.

IV. Reporting and Assessment

COFFEL made its reports, which reviewed activities and observations concerning the procedures of the election process, regularly and put them into publication every Monday,. The reports were sent to the National Election Committee, the European Union, human rights organizations, foreign embassies and other relevant organizations.

Reports were made as soon as the volunteers referred their information and reports to the commune and district coordinators. Once a week, the district level had to report to the provincial level, which would then report to headquarters in Phnom Penh. This was the reporting procedure in normal circumstances during the pre-election period. If necessary, all levels would make their reports immediately.

For special circumstances (such as election day and counting days), reports were made daily or as soon possible.

At the central office in Phnom Penh, COFFEL organized its network of telephones and fax machines in seven or eight venues to receive information. In the meantime, important reports needed to be distributed, so COFFEL delegated its staff to regularly interact at the district level by collaborating with the CECs, PECs at the provincial level and the NEC at headquarters.

Information obtained was passed on from the source to the commune office, then to from commune to district, district to province and province to Phnom Penh. In some areas in these levels it was extremely difficult because of the lack of a communication system in Cambodia. COFFEL, though, had planned for this difficulty by arranging for its staff to cooperate with the CECs and PECs and to request to use their communication facilities. In some places COFFEL used its ICOM communication system and in other places communicated through COMFREL, LICADHO or private telephones.

On every Saturday, however, COFFEL's provincial coordinators had to come to COFFEL's office in Phnom Penh with specific reports from staff and volunteers based at their sites.

The election reporting and assessment which COFFEL has made was based on the information obtained from staff and volunteers who followed events and monitored on election day.

The monitoring focused especially on: the attitudes and activities of the NEC, PECs and CECs; the attitude and function of local authorities and the competence involved; the human rights environment surrounding voter registration; the freedom of and appropriate atmosphere for participation of national and international observers; the laws, procedures and regulations for political parties, as well as other measures taken by the NEC, PECs an CECs.

Conclusions about the result and process of voting and publication or proclamation related to the election were made and approved by the COFFEL Board of Directors.

V. Future Plans

In order to monitor activities in this second and new government of the Kingdom of Cambodia, COFFEL has prepared and had many key tasks to be taken, after monitoring the July 26, 1998 election process.

To take part in rehabilitating, spreading and strengthening democracy to become the culture of Cambodian society, COFFEL has made a plan of action. Through this it can strengthen and enable democracy and effectively implement the law through educating people about a new era of democratization in the region. We have member organizations which are supportive members and volunteers in other provinces who used to receive education and had work experiences. COFFEL, which will use those staff members as partners in implementing project planning, is just only a coordinator of monitoring programs and will provide technical and financial assistance to the planned projects.

COFFEL is convinced that a participatory system of partner organizations will be useful to build up the capacity of member organizations and strengthen the civil society, particularly its effectiveness in utilizing funding. COFFEL's purpose is to strengthen the key structures which can speed up the long-term education process and can sustain the efforts to enhance democratization and popular education on public administration systems and the government of the Kingdom of Cambodia. COFFEL has planned major activities which are divided into phases. The first phase will be a four month period (August to December 1998), the second phase a long-term program which includes major future activities:

- education on democracy, organization and election administration
- encouraging active public participation in democratization
- education on public administration and the country's government
- research and publication on public opinion
- monitoring the implementation of laws and the responsibilities of the new government
- education on democracy, human rights and the neutrality of the Royal Armed Forces
- encouraging participation in local elections
- encouraging participation in social activities

These planned activities will be able to fulfill the needs and will be effective up to the local elections in 1999. In addition, these projects assist in strengthening education and rehabilitating democracy in Cambodia. The Coalition for Free and Fair Elections will work jointly with public officials, political party members, women, the armed forces, police, students, intellectuals and, especially, other institutes.

CONCLUSION: Democracy education cannot take hold in a short time because people cannot understand quickly. For a country to be considered democratic, its people and leaders must try to have their efforts build up for a long time. What they think and do must be devoted to democracy.

COMFREL

I. Pre-election Monitoring

1. Overall Assessment

Before the election, COMFREL received the reports of the incidents from our provincial network and member organizations, in particular ADHOC, Human Rights Vigilance and Khmer Kampuchea Krom Human Rights Association. The incidents concerned cases of election-related violence, killing, threats and intimidation, including the tearing down of political party signboards.

Some people were killed in some provinces of Cambodia. Most of the victims were the members of opposition parties.

The local authorities in some provinces did not perform their duties in a neutral and impartial way. For instance, in Kep, Kandal and Kampot, the authorities took down FUNCINPEC and Sam Rainsy Party's signboards. We monitored the threat and intimidation of the Sam Rainsy Party in several parts of Cambodia, including death threats. In some districts, the government officials threatened to kill members of the Sam Rainsy Party.

2. Registration Assessment

We saw positive aspects of voter registration. A lot of people were keen to vote. We noticed that there was not any violence or killing during the registration process. There were some irregularities in some registration stations. In most areas, village and commune chiefs and local government officials were seen within the voter registration stations directly interfering with the registration process. In some parts of Cambodia, the government officials or CPP agents collected registration cards from the voters for the purpose of noting their serial numbers for unclear political party purposes and when they returned the cards to the voters, they threatened them to vote for CPP.

In several provinces, the people were intimidated to make a thumb print indicating allegiance to CPP. At many stations, commune leaders or local officials used their authorized presence to vouch for the eligibility of minors and immigrant Vietnamese unable to speak Khmer to register.

II. Volunteer Recruitment and Training

1. Training Methodology

COMFREL set up the topics in advance before we trained our provincial coordinators of the 23 provinces. The topics that we mentioned were democracy, human rights, the importance of the election, the secrecy of the vote and the role of the individuals. Before we held the course, two or three provincial coordinators in each province were invited to attend a seminar or meeting in Phnom Penh and they were provided accommodation, transportation, per diem and food. Before we started training them, we prepared an hour-long lesson plan, which included teaching materials, posters,

leaflets and pamphlets to explain to the participants. Moreover, we also provided them some instructions and training techniques. After they returned to the provinces, they distributed what they had learned to other provincial coordinators who could spread out the training sessions to the others in the provinces, districts, communes and villages and those who were not appointed to participate in the workshop in Phnom Penh.

We carried out 3,616 observing courses for the election campaign, the polling day and the counting day to strengthen the capacity of our observers. Eleven-thousand voter education trainers were trained in 8,868 villages in Cambodia. For voter education, we mainly focused on three big topics: democracy, human rights and the election. There were about one million voters who attended the training.

2. Observer Recruitment Strategies

Before the electoral process, COMFREL had only provincial coordinators who covered all of COMFREL's work. To arrange the election successfully, we authorized them to select those who were competent in reading and writing reports and those who were neutral, impartial and who lived in the village to be district contact persons, commune volunteers and village observers. All of them were COMFREL observers.

3. Sample Voter Education Materials

All the materials we have distributed so far included posters, leaflets and pamphlets. Before we published, the approvals of COMFREL first representative or Executive Director was first needed, and after that we cooperated with the NEC in order to ask for permission to publish or announce educational materials that involved democracy, human rights and the elections. What we arranged with them up depended on the Polling Station Commission Manual. Sometimes some corrections were made by our donors before handing materials over.

III. Reporting and Assessment

1. Reporting

As you know, COMFREL had 11,179 volunteers in all 23 provinces and towns, including coordinators, district contact person, communal representatives and volunteers in villages. COMFREL deployed all these members to almost every polling station throughout the country to monitor the election process and monitor rules and procedures during the polling day, the closing of the polling station, the sending of materials and ballot boxes to counting centers and the procedures for vote counting in the counting centers. In order to facilitate the reports and activities of monitoring, COMFREL had arranged the forms of reports so that the observers could be able to fulfill their duties properly by marking on the forms that COMFREL had given them.

COMFREL divided forms of reports into three kinds for the volunteers to fill out during observation on polling day. The first form is for the observation of serious violations, the second

form is for the summary report of the election process and the third form is for the detailed information about the election activities in the polling station. To summarize the information related to these three forms, COMFREL organized the form of joint reports for the contact persons in the central office in Phnom Penh and all information and reports were sent by volunteer observers from various communes, villages and provinces throughout the country.

For the counting day, COMFREL organized the reporting form for monitoring the vote count. In the report, the observers had to tick in charts for the following questions:

- was there a proper order outside the counting center?
- were there any other organizations that participated in the counting center?
- were election officials present at the center?
- what time did the counting start?
- did all boxes from all the polling stations arrive when the counting started?
- were the plastic seals of the big bags safe?
- were all materials in the big bags?
- were the seals and locks of the ballot boxes in proper order?

Some similar information and reports during the election day were sent to the central headquarters by observers. COMFREL had recommended to all its observers that if there were serious violations in or near the polling stations, such as bomb explosion, firing, killing, intimidation, threats, violations against observers or other fraud, the observers had to send the report of violation to the office in Phnom Penh immediately. For the summary report form, COMFREL asked its observers:

- were all important materials in the polling stations?
- were members of the polling stations qualified for their duties?
- were members of the polling stations neutral?
- were voters whose names were not on the registration lists allowed to vote or not?
- was the secrecy guaranteed?
- were persons whose names were struck off from the lists present at the polling station or not?
- were there any threats or intimidation against the election officials?
- were there any other unauthorized people who were interfering in the polling station?
- were there any bribes for the voters?
- did any other party agents complain?

2. Assessment

As you have known, COMFREL had nearly 12,000 volunteer observers deployed throughout the country and those observers had played very important roles in collecting and sending information and reports relating to irregularities and violations coming out of the election. To assess the comprehensive situation and make the statement with neutrality, COMFREL requested its networks and activists to give accurate reports on violations and threats with basic proof from their locality and

sent the reports immediately to the central headquarters. In issuing the statement, it had to be based on the facts provided by activists. The group could not rely on rumors or unclear proof. COMFREL had to include violations committed by the ruling party and by the opposition parties in its statement to provide a balanced situation. In this sense, any violations committed by any political party would be included in the statement. COMFREL had also included in its statement what the NEC had done, whether done well or poorly.

IV. Parallel Vote Tabulation

1. Organization of Documents and Getting Information on the Counting Day

a. organization of documents

Parallel vote tabulation (PVT), which was in the form of collecting vote figures of each political party, had four forms: two forms for provincial level and two other forms for communal or counting centers' observers. These included:

- a form recording the number of votes won by each party at the polling station
- a form for totaling the number of votes won by each political party at commune or counting centers
- a form for totaling the number of votes won by each political party in all communes in a province
- a form for totaling the number of votes won by each political party in all provinces

b. Organization of information network

In the central headquarters in the city we had 14 telephones and four fax machines for receiving information from different provinces and provides it to the central headquarters. When receiving information through telephones or faxes the operators would send all information to our computer center (15 computers) immediately so that the information of the results of the election from every commune could be included in the computers. We had installed 15 computers to feed in the results of the election of the 23 provinces and municipalities. We used the Access program for our 15 computers and we had organized and set up formulas relating to the counting of all 23 provinces and municipalities and 1,600 communes.

2. Training of the Ballot Counting Agents

We had invited the coordinators from the 23 provinces and municipalities to participate in the training process on how to fill in the four forms. After the training session, the coordinators went back to their provinces and they trained the commune-level volunteers to understand how to receive the results and the method for sending in results. This helped volunteers to do their work properly and accurately and send the information to the relevant provinces or municipalities.

3. Sending Information

We had two stages of sending information:

a. from communes to provinces

After the vote count, all communal and provincial volunteers would check and record the results counted in each commune. They then immediately sent all records to COMFREL provincial headquarters immediately.

b. from provinces and towns to the central headquarters in Phnom Penh

Having received the results of the vote count form communes, COMFREL in each province would transfer the information or records immediately to the Phnom Penh headquarters through telephones or faxes, without calculating the figures.

4. The Central Headquarters in Phnom Penh

In the central headquarters in Phnom Penh, we had organized the working groups to conduct parallel vote tabulation, which consisted of 34 staff members, two coordinators, two secretaries, one expert, 15 typists and 14 telephone operators. Materials for receiving information in the COMFREL headquarters in Phnom Penh consisted of 15 computers, 14 telephones and four fax machines.

The results of the votes won by each political party automatically appeared on the computer's screen in the tables which had been set up for each province and for each political party.

When we received the results from all communes and provinces, we took the result for each party from all provinces to calculate the seats. The result of the PVT was announced through a press conference, newspapers, magazines and E-mail.

V. Future Plans

- Lobbying and Advocacy

This is very necessary, for the time being and in the future as well. When we talk about the preparation of the current laws in Cambodia, COMFREL plays an important role in lobbying and advocacy, especially in discussions relevant to the election laws and procedures which will be required to have democracy and a respect for human rights.

- Observation

This is one of the important duties for COMFREL observers to continue because COMFREL has not only observed the pre-election process and polling day, but also has observed the post-election process to make sure that the elected political parties will do what they have promised.

- Education

This is the main task because we will not be able to do anything without the basic knowledge which all people, especially the rural people, should have access to: education on human rights and democracy, and the decisions made to elect their own representatives.

- Dissemination of Information

Dissemination of information is necessarily important through magazine, radio and television this will allow people to have access to all reliable information.

- Communication

COMFREL will continue to work in close cooperation with local organizations, such as COFFEL and NICFEC, and it will also continue to cooperate with other international organizations in accordance with its principles.

- Difficulties Ahead

These are related to the instability of the situation and living conditions of the people, especially those who live in the far-flung areas and those who have little education.

- COMFREL

Our volunteers would like to maintain and sustain COMFREL. They have not isolated themselves from COMFREL after the election because they always have thought that they have done very good work with COMFREL.

- Preparation

COMFREL members will be ready to take part in monitoring of any election process. The group needs at least six months to prepare itself before the next election takes place.

NICFEC

I. Election Monitoring in Cambodia

The 1998 election was the first election organized by Cambodia. The situation in Cambodia is still in between peace and war, and the social economy is still poor. Most of the people cannot fully understand respect for human rights, the right to survive, democracy and elections. Four organizations and associations, the Association of Fine Art, the Association of Architectural Students, the Association of Khmer Literature Students and LICADHO, have united to form NICFEC with the purpose of contributing and endorsing free and fair elections in Cambodia. NICFEC has identified three main programs:

1. Art Program

- mixed art performance
- traditional plays with the content adapted to a specific aspect of the election process (e.g. to review the grievance process)

2. Training Program

- human rights
- democracy
- constitution and law

3. Election Observation Program

- election legislation
- roles of election staff
- tasks of election observers

NICFEC held its first activities in 15 provinces and municipalities (of 24): Phnom Penh, Kandal, Takeo, Kompong Speu, Kompot, Svey Rieng, Prey Veng, Kampong Chhnang, Pursat, Battambang, Bantey Meanchey, Siem Reap, Kampong Thom, Kampong Cham and Kratie.

NICFEC has maintained neutrality, monitoring and judgment:

1. It has monitored its leadership committee, officials and staff;
2. Monitored the performance of staff and observers; and
3. Refused to take gifts and conditional assistance from political parties.

Naturally, no group can be 100 percent neutral because one person cannot vote for all 39 political parties. However, the leadership committee, officials, staff, performance staff and observers do not have rights to utilize the commitment of NICFEC for any political party.

Collaboration with other organizations can have strong points and weak points. The strong points are:

1. Assembling leaders with capacity and strong consideration;
2. Having materials and equipment to share;
3. Rapid information delivery;
4. Deploying staff appropriate to the purpose; and
5. Enough and high quality of service.

Among the weaknesses of having multiple groups are:

1. Having many opposite ideas which lead to fewer results; and
2. Managerial or administrative difficulties.

II. Organizational Structure, Finance and Information Reference

- NICFEC has been formed by: the Association of Fine Art, the Association of Architectural Students, the Association of Khmer Literature Students and LICADHO.
- NICFEC makes decision by convening a meeting of five persons in the Committee and finalizing decisions by a simple majority vote, with the director as a signatory.
- Observation staff who are deployed throughout the country communicate with each other by organizing meetings and training sessions.
- NICFEC did not raise any money from its members. The observation was conducted on a voluntary basis. The staff members had a separate income from their businesses, so they would be able to use their own sources of income to pay for their transportation and food costs with little support from NICFEC. Those who secretly raised money from members would, as a result, be fired immediately from the job.
- We spoke to the press when the press agents came to meet us, and during press conferences. With the government we made statements, and we spoke to the donors when we asked for donations and made monthly reports.

III. Volunteer Recruitment and Training

- The recruitment was based on people we had known very well and who could be relied on to be neutral and act impartially. These people were chosen from nongovernmental organizations, including students, and they were recruited on a voluntary basis. The selection would be among those who had national interests at heart and who had never thought that money was more important than their reputation.

- The NICFEC Committee appointed its observation representatives for provinces and towns.
- The representatives of provinces and towns recruited their observation members from people who lived in those provinces and towns.
- NICFEC Committee recognized the observation members. The job has a limited time because the election observation was not the observers' professional job. In the advanced democratic countries all people are self-election observers.
- Both genders of the election observers had been trained to understand their duties. They are at least 18 years old and have at least a primary education.
- People decided to become observers for NICFEC because:
 - They are proud of having participated in serving the society.
 - They will gain experience for the next election.
 - They know that their leaders do not have good backgrounds.
 - They hope that they will earn some money from the job.
- NICFEC provided:
 - US\$150 for each province for other expenditures.
 - 10,000 Riels (\$2.50) for each observer to pay for two days of food.
 - One t-shirt, one cap, and a seven-page document for their duties.
- NICFEC experienced the following problems with their observers:
 - They were accused of not being neutral.
 - Some of them had been cheated before; therefore, they had tried to make up for what they had lost.
 - Some opportunists styled themselves as neutral people.
 - Some election organizations had been funded by political parties.
 - Observers were said to have received too much money and might receive money forever.
 - Some did not know their duties and thought that if they were registered as observers, they would have a long term job.
 - Some had thought that the chief had embezzled money; therefore, they were paid a small amount of money.
- The information provided to the observers: NICFEC is a neutral organization and has not been involved in any other political parties. It is a non-profit and voluntary organization which works for the nation and is supported with work facilities and food. Those who accept a bribe will be immediately fired from their job.
- NICFEC observers had been trained on human rights issues by LICADHO and were also trained as election observers by NDI.

- Lists of observers have been kept in the office including: background information with a picture, an application and a contract.

IV. Assessment and Reporting

- To evaluate the election, we had the following information sources:
 - Information received from observers with written papers or proof and witnesses.
 - Rules or principles of the election on verification.
 - A meeting to decide whether some observations were valid.
- NICFEC observers were able to receive fair information because they had been trained in advance before they were put into practice.
- Intimidation had some influences on reports. However, the observers were clever enough to provide information.
- Though encountering difficulties, they still managed to record things.
- The provincial office received information from the districts and communes and from the observers at the polling stations. They then sent the information by telephone, faxes, cars and motor-bikes.
- While receiving the information, the office based in Phnom Penh made reports and held discussions for a statement for distribution.

V. Future Plans

- Having finished the election, NICFEC is planning the following training programs:
 - Human rights
 - Democracy
 - The constitution and general laws
 - The election
- These activities will be important because the above problems have been understood by a minority of people and all the people living in a country governed by law should understand these issues.
- The plans will meet an impasse without any money to support their activities, if there is a person who receives an order to interfere or attempt to destroy the plans or if people only think of their own interests.
- Volunteer observers will continue to be used for the next election.
- Three months time is needed in order to implement the plans.

**Appendix II: Self-assessments completed by
COFFEL, COMFREL and NICFEC at the conference**

In preparation for the conference, NDI designed a written exercise for the Cambodian EMOs to use to evaluate their 1998 domestic monitoring efforts. The three groups completed this evaluation tool during the first day of the conference. Their self-assessments are as follows:

1. Was the purpose (goal) for which your organization was established accomplished?

COFFEL: So far, so good, because COFFEL had a clear workplan from which to implement its program. During the operation, we had an inadequate communication system and other difficulties and therefore could not accomplish our goals 100 percent.

COMFREL: Yes, it was.

NICFEC: Yes.

2. Were the specific objectives, as set out by your organization, for the pre-election, election and post-election phases achieved?

COFFEL: COFFEL has achieved all the objectives that had been set out in the workplan and has received acknowledgment of its good work from political parties, the NEC, local authorities and, especially, the international community.

COMFREL: Yes, for the pre-election and election phases, but for the post-election phase the objectives were not achieved because the new government has not been set up and the National Assembly has not functioned smoothly.

NICFEC: Yes.

3. Was the method used by your organization to collect information regarding the election process adequate, culturally appropriate and reflective of the existing political context?

COFFEL: We set out a good system of transmitting reports but had insufficient resources and difficulty accessing phones and fax machines from the field.

COMFREL: Yes, by deploying 12,000 observers at polling stations in 23 provinces and municipalities, and by asking them to complete the checklist which already has relevant information included.

NICFEC: Yes, it was.

4. Was the post-election statement issued by your organization covered by the local media?

COFFEL: We issued the preliminary reports to embassies, news agencies, donors and the NEC. We even sent the statement to the media but they did not put it on the record unless we paid them.

COMFREL: No.

NICFEC: Yes.

5. Were members/supporters of your organization informed of the coalition's findings? If so, how?

COFFEL: In general, COFFEL did not find any significant fraud during its operation. COFFEL was interviewed on international and national radio and television about our reactions and intervention.

COMFREL: Yes, through the office in Phnom Penh.

NICFEC: Yes, by inviting provincial representatives to meetings at which we informed them.

6. Did your organization issue a preliminary or interim statement?

COFFEL: We have issued many statements and preliminary reports. In particular, we issued the joint statement with COMFREL and NICFEC. But these statements and reports did not mention "free and fair" elections.

COMFREL: Yes, on July 27, 1998 about the balloting process.

NICFEC: Yes.

7. Were verbal reports made by monitors in addition to written reports regarding their observations of the process?

COFFEL: COFFEL provincial and district coordinators have provided written reports and verbal reports. We have a weekly meeting with these individuals to share ideas regarding the general situation, intimidation and violence.

COMFREL: No.

NICFEC: Yes.

8. Was the process of analyzing the information collected longer or more difficult than expected?

COFFEL: We can say that it was both. First, we needed the evidence and needed to find facts. Second, we needed clarification from our field representatives. The difficulties also related to our lack of access to communication lines.

COMFREL: Yes, because the reporting by volunteers was slow and late.

NICFEC: Yes.

9. Were the findings of your organization shared with election officials, political party representatives, international observers, the media or other domestic monitors?

COFFEL: We did not share information, but we have reported on what COFFEL found.

COMFREL: Yes.

NICFEC: The findings were not shared with election officials or political parties.

10. How was the final statement disseminated, that is, what medium was employed to communicate your message?

COFFEL: We sent it to donors, embassies, the NEC, press agencies and the international community, especially the EU.

COMFREL: Through the *Cambodia Daily*, but it only quoted some sentences.

NICFEC: Through press conferences and sending statements directly to all national and international organizations and all embassies.

11. Have there been local, regional or national follow-up meetings for your organization's leadership to conduct an analysis of the election or determine next steps for the coalition?

COFFEL: We have conducted meetings at the national level and at the local level. At the national level we cooperated with the Cambodian Institute for Human Rights (CIHR), COMFREL, NICFEC, NDI and others on the behalf of COFFEL.

COMFREL: Yes, COMFREL went to conduct the assessment of its activities in the 16 provinces and municipalities.

NICFEC: Yes.

12. Were the monitoring forms structured in a manner that provided your organization with the necessary information to make a credible determination regarding the fairness of the electoral process?

COFFEL: COFFEL designed its own monitoring checklist with clear and detailed instructions and full questionnaires related to its election preparations, but in some cases we lacked enough time to train monitors on the use of these forms.

COMFREL: Yes, they were credible for collecting information about the election process.

NICFEC: Yes, fairly.

13. What recommendations would you make regarding deterrents against intimidation, coercion

and breaches of impartiality, whether perpetrated by government officials or supporters of a political party?

COFFEL: In these cases, COFFEL would request either the NEC and local authorities to fully collaborate with COFFEL to create a peaceful election atmosphere.

COMFREL: COMFREL finds that these activities violated the electoral law and procedure of the NEC.

NICFEC: There are several recommendations to give observers: (1) to know how to keep secrets; (2) to know how to protect themselves; (3) to know how to inform everyone, especially human rights organizations; and (4) to know how to release information secretly.

14. Has the process of filing and resolving complaints or other election-related disputes been addressed by election officials in a genuine manner?

COFFEL: It was the mistake and deficiency of the NEC, PECs and CECs [provincial and commune-level election committees] to disregard the requests and complaints of opposition parties, especially when they did not respect the suggestions of domestic monitors to do so.

COMFREL: The political parties did not know about the procedure of filing complaints and the procedures of the NEC.

NICFEC: Yes, in a genuine manner.

15. What was your organization's relationship to the NEC during the pre-election, election and post-election phases?

COFFEL: (1) To clarify the election law, procedures and codes of conduct; (2) to receive recognition and accreditation; (3) to cooperate and intervene; (4) media and publication; and (5) to report on irregularities and solutions to problems.

COMFREL: In almost all of its work, COMFREL had a relationship with the NEC.

NICFEC: (1) To give documents to the NEC to control their content for dissemination; (2) to ask for accreditation of observers; and (3) to make suggestions or requests, or to give ideas through statements.

16. What was your organization's relationship to the international monitors and reaction to their interim statements?

COFFEL: (1) To provide information and (2) to comment on their coverage of geographic areas. So far, COFFEL has not made any reaction to their statements because they are made within the right of free speech.

COMFREL: Through joint cooperation in observing developments in the regions. We think that their interim statement is premature.

NICFEC: There were 89 international observers participating in NICFEC's effort. We believed that the statement was premature.

17. What impact did your organization's monitoring activities throughout the electoral period have on voter participation and confidence in the electoral process?

COFFEL: In reality, the impact was concentrated on the morality and discipline of the NEC staff in their operations and responsibilities, as well as on our staff. We have conducted almost 4,000 training sessions to reach three million voters to convince them to use their right to vote and to reduce the violence. Therefore, the election preparation and election process was under the eyes of domestic observers and the international community.

COMFREL: Through COMFREL's participation in observing the election process, we made a good impact on the process and helped to avoid a lot of violations.

NICFEC: We received official accreditation and political parties and voters had confidence in us.

18. What was the general reaction to the results by key institutions such as the media, the military, religious institutions or defeated political parties?

COFFEL: The dispute between opposition parties resulted from misconduct and disagreement over the proper way of solving the problems. These led to demonstrations among the winning parties, which led to anarchy in the society, especially when the authorities killed many people through their intervention.

COMFREL: After the announcement of election results, first there was serious violations against the defeated political parties and then there were killings of opposition activists and monks.

NICFEC: They used NICFEC's statement as evidence.

19. Have there been any reprisals or threats directed at citizens for having participated in the election monitoring process or to citizens for having voted for a particular political party?

COFFEL: There was not significant violence or threats through action but there was some verbal intimidation, so that many political parties and voters and some local monitors stayed in a climate of fear.

COMFREL: There were in some cases.

NICFEC: Yes, there was some violence.

20. Was the conduct and behavior of election officials during the electoral and post-election phases consistent with the election law?

COFFEL: As COFFEL has recorded, there were deficiencies in the performance of not only political parties' representatives but also the NEC and its polling officials and officials from the PECs and CECs. These derived largely from a lack of experience and training and insufficient respect for the laws.

COMFREL: Yes, but there were some problems.

NICFEC: Some officials worked well, but some did not.

21. What were some of the key lessons learned by the coalition during the electoral period?

COFFEL: (1) To prepare pre- and post-election workplans; (2) to recruit, train and deploy monitors; (3) to study the general aspects of the monitoring process; (4) to build relationships with authorities; and (5) to address fundraising problems.

COMFREL: (1) To learn how to observe the voter registration, election campaign, polling day and counting day and (2) to educate people about democracy, human rights and the election.

NICFEC: (1) To learn aspects of the work: how to receive information, provide information and exchange information and (2) to learn how to keep secret and defend themselves.

22. What were some of the most difficult challenges confronted by the coalition during the electoral period?

COFFEL: (1) Funding sources; (2) communication facilities; (3) limited time; and (4) human resources.

COMFREL: (1) Organizing programs to be on time; (2) communication; (3) transportation (because of geographical features); and (4) lack of finance.

NICFEC: (1) Receiving threats; (2) a member was killed; (3) lack of finance; and (4) lack of transportation and communication.

23. What would you do differently if you were asked to plan another domestic monitoring effort?

COFFEL: After the general elections, local democracy will be talked about again with the preparation of elections for commune chiefs, an election for which preparation had been underway before the general elections of 1998. The process of formulating a new government and enacting and implementing its new system and policies will be a major undertaking for the Cambodian nation. Therefore, COFFEL will be monitoring and following the policies and role or responsibilities of the

new government as well as National Assembly members, and will see how they can be approached to take up matters on their behalf. COFFEL has set out a workplan and concepts of activities to carry out over the next couple of months.

COMFREL: There are two major works to be do: (1) education and (2) observation. Besides these, to participate in strengthening the civil society.

NICFEC: We would like to participate in all election-related work and to educate people about democracy and human rights.

Other comments:

COFFEL: COFFEL would like to suggest to NDI to keep collaborating as a partner in the promotion of democratic principles and democratic culture in Cambodian society. We strongly need your technical assistance as well as a small amount of funding support, as you have supported us so far. These kinds of support will enable COFFEL to accomplish its goals for the future.

NICFEC: NICFEC would like to seek a specific formula to be able to evaluate the election by percentage, for example, “the election is 70 percent free and fair and 30 percent unfree and unfair.” On what formula or criteria could this evaluation be based?

Appendix III: SWOT analyses produced by
COFFEL, COMFREL and NICFEC at the conference

COFFEL

<p style="text-align: center;">STRENGTHS</p> <p>good organizational structure clear planning human resources and materials good relations with national and international bodies ability to educate and encourage people to volunteer patience bravery impartiality</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">WEAKNESSES</p> <p>lack of communication and transportation short time in organizing lack of or insufficient equipment and funding insufficient efforts to educate staff and volunteers not specialized in organizing the election did not study the electoral law adopted by the election commission limited and late outside assistance</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">OPPORTUNITIES</p> <p>for steering committee to link with donors (companies and individuals) to encourage people to volunteer for election-related activities to communicate with relevant authorities to encourage collaboration and cooperation to strengthen the organizational structure and increase the opportunities for volunteers to receive training to communicate with other organizations such as FEMA, NDI, etc., about monitoring</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">THREATS</p> <p>threats from authorities authorities who did not clearly know their duties funding problems unstable political environment low level of knowledge and low living standard among the people</p>

COMFREL

<p style="text-align: center;">STRENGTHS</p> <p>clear and accurate organizational structure strong program activities, including: PVT (parallel vote tabulation), education, monitoring and lobbying good internal relationship</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">WEAKNESSES</p> <p>volunteers and staff have some limited knowledge or abilities lack of experience lack of means of transportation and communication system materials and technology for use in the office</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">OPPORTUNITIES</p> <p>to organize roundtable programs to conduct a PVT to strengthen civil society</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">THREATS</p> <p>shortage of time threats from local authorities and the government negative impact of other organizations recruiting members by promising incentives and benefits programs overlap with those of other organizations</p>

NICFEC

<p style="text-align: center;">STRENGTHS</p> <p>capable staff suitable for conducting monitoring work received public support internal solidarity and unity recognition from national and international institutes ability to cooperate with the two other coalitions have talented leaders, experts and advisers to administer and implement activities</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">WEAKNESSES</p> <p>lack of funding lack of facilities, materials and transportation for operations lack of time to provide volunteers with more training failure to deploy observers to unsafe areas lack offices at all levels observers are not brave enough to report irregularities because of concerns for personal security</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">OPPORTUNITIES</p> <p>to strengthen the ability of observers, staff and leadership through more training to conduct staff exchanges with groups abroad to strengthen its provincial network through more contact with remote areas to conduct civic education at the village level to improve contacts with political parties and promote dialogue among parties</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">THREATS</p> <p>threats to the lives of observers threats to cancel the operation of the monitoring group observers threatened to report false information reports have to be supervised in advance by commune-level election authorities accusations of being partisan</p>

Appendix IV: Action plans produced by
COFFEL, COMFREL and NICFEC at the conference

COFFEL

ACTIVITY	RESOURCES NEEDED	TIMELINE
Election Monitoring	human resources materials funding reorganized provincial, district and commune offices	January to December 1999
Citizen Education on Democracy	training materials research funding trainers target groups participation of local authorities	January to December 1999
Public Conferences on Democratization (once every three months)	human resources materials international experts funding	January to December 1999
Constitutional and Legal Monitoring	legal expertise funding communication system legal documents	January 1999 to December 2003
Public Opinion Research	research expertise communication system funding	January 1999 to December 2003
Monthly Publications	materials project coordinator funding equipment	January 1999 to December 2003
Organizing for Local Elections	popular support funding training materials trainers equipment communication system nationwide organizational network	November 1998 to December 1999

COMFREL

GOAL: To build democracy and the rule of law in Cambodia

OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES
To influence legislation, policy-making and the development of election laws	lobby concerned authorities
To increase public participation in choosing commune-level leaders	organize and conduct civic and voter education
To develop the leadership skills and organizational capacity among EMO management and staff	train staff members at district, provincial and commune levels on management and training techniques
To raise the level of awareness at the grassroots level	conduct civic and voter education publish materials such as leaflets, magazines and posters
To monitor the activities of elected officials and political parties	publish reports and statements about the activities of officials and parties

NICFEC

OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES
To promote democracy and human rights	public training and education on democracy and human rights publish reports, books and texts on democracy and human rights
To promote public understanding of the constitution, election law and other laws	publicly disseminate information about the constitution, election-related laws and other laws that will affect the country's political framework hold public seminars and organize public training sessions on these topics
To encourage a democratic process for commune-level elections	monitor the development of a law governing commune-level elections and the implementation of this law develop a list of observers' duties

RESOURCES REQUIRED

Human Resources	human rights trainers legal experts program leaders messengers performers (civic and voter education)
Funding Resources	bank account income sources, both from inside and outside Cambodia program budget
Material Resources	facilities and office equipment, such as computers, telephones and fax machines transportation documents food materials and equipment for performances (civic and voter education)

POSSIBLE SOURCES OF ASSISTANCE

Domestic Sources	generous individuals and companies (provided there are no political conditions attached) the King contributions from members money raised through theater performances and sale of folk art
International Sources	international donor community (international NGOs and foreign government) generous individuals or companies (provided there are no political conditions attached) money raised through theater performances and sale of folk art

Appendix V: List of conference participants

AMN CONFERENCE

CAMBODIA ELECTION MONITORING ORGANIZATIONS LESSONS LEARNED AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

October 1-2, 1998
Juliana Hotel, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

BANGLADESH - Fair Election Monitoring Alliance (FEMA)

Tarikul Ghani (Dhaka)

CAMBODIA - Coalition for Free and Fair Elections (COFFEL)

Iv Borin (Phnom Penh)
Yi Dara (Phnom Penh)
Lay Raphy (Phnom Penh)
Sek Sophal (Phnom Penh)
Lay Sovathara (Phnom Penh)
Chea Minea (Siem Reap)
Tea Rim (Kompot)
Som Rina (Svey Rieng)
Kong Sitha (Prey Veng)
Preap Sotharith (Svey Rieng)

CAMBODIA - Committee for Free and Fair Elections (COMFREL)

Key Chhandarith (Phnom Penh)
Kim Chhorn (Phnom Penh)
Kri Kiriroth (Phnom Penh)
Leav Sakoeun (Phnom Penh)
Mak Sarat (Phnom Penh)
Nam Chanda (Kampong Cham)
Mom Chantara (Prey Veng)
Tri Chhurn (Kompot)
Em Sambodina (Kratie)

Hen Sron (Kampong Chhnang)

CAMBODIA - Neutral and Independent Committee for Fair Elections in Cambodia (NICFEC)

Chhit Nhor (Phnom Penh)
Hang Puthea (Phnom Penh)
Phann Sok (Phnom Penh)
Mao Sokvar (Phnom Penh)
Kaem Sokthearith (Phnom Penh)
Seng Sarom (Kratie)
Khiev Soeun (Kompot)
Chhim Somrauch (Svay Rieng)
Keo Sothea (Takeo)
Kim Sovanna (Kompong Cham)

NEPAL - National Election Observation Committee (NEOC)

Kapil Shrestha (Kathmandu)

PHILIPPINES - National Citizens Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL)

Damaso Magbual (Manila)

THAILAND - Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL)

Evelyn Serrano (Bangkok)

THAILAND - PollWatch

Somchai Srisutthiyakorn (Bangkok)
Pann Yuanlaie (Pattani)

UNITED STATES - National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI)

Bee Apirat (Bangkok)
Andrew Fuys (Washington)
Keith Jennings (Washington)
Sarah Malm (Bangkok)
Sophie Richardson (Washington)
Sok Seang (Phnom Penh)

Appendix VI: Conference agenda

AMN CONFERENCE
CAMBODIA ELECTION MONITORING ORGANIZATIONS
LESSONS LEARNED AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

October 1-2, 1998
Juliana Hotel, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

AGENDA

Thursday, October 1

- 8:00-8:30 Registration, Juliana Hotel
- 8:30-9:00 Introductions: participants will introduce themselves and briefly state their expectations for the program.
- 9:00-9:15 *Opening*
Keith Jennings (NDI):
 review of conference agenda and objectives
 discussion of the importance of domestic monitoring and EMO exchanges
- 9:15-9:45 *The Asian Monitoring Network and regional networking opportunities*
- 1) Sarah Malm (NDI): explanation of the AMN program and discussion of AMN past and future activities and initiatives, including the AMN resource center in Bangkok.
- 2) Evelyn Serrano (ANFREL): discussion of regional networking and experience working with ANFREL.
- 9:45-10:00 Break
- 10:00-11:00 *Roundtable: Approaches to domestic election monitoring in Cambodia*
Each coalition (COFFEL, COMFREL, NICFEC) will discuss (15 minutes each):
 pre-election monitoring activities
 development of a strategy for activities
 maintenance of neutrality and nonpartisanship
 reasons for and the effects of having three coalitions instead of one

11:00-12:00 *EMOs in Cambodia: Structure, finance and communication processes*

1) COFFEL presentation (15 minutes):
management structure of coalition
fundraising strategy
communication system with provincial/local offices
managing relationships with donors and international observers
(Written copies will be available on all three coalitions.)

2) Tarikul Ghani from FEMA, response:
summary of main themes from coalition presentation
examples/experiences from Bangladesh
overarching challenges/lessons learned

3) Open discussion

12:00-1:00 Lunch

1:00-2:30 *EMOs in Cambodia: Volunteer recruitment and training*

1) NICFEC presentation (15 minutes):
methods for recruiting and training volunteers
training methodology
successful aspects of recruitment and training
challenges faced by the coalition
volunteerism and compensation in Cambodia
(Written copies will be available on all three coalitions.)

2) Somchai Srisutthiyakorn and Pann Yuanlaie from Pollwatch Foundation, response:
summary of main themes from coalition presentation
examples/experiences from Thailand
general challenges to and lessons learned from volunteer recruitment and training

3) Open discussion

2:30-4:00 *EMOs in Cambodia: Election reporting and assessment*

1) COMFREL presentation (15 minutes):
reporting process on polling and counting days
criteria used to assess the elections
difficulties the coalition encountered
intimidation of volunteers
(Written copies will be available for all three coalitions.)

2) Damaso G. Magbual of NAMFREL and Evelyn Serrano of ANFREL, response:
summary of main themes from coalition presentation
examples/experiences elsewhere
overarching challenges/lessons learned

3) Open discussion

4:00-4:15 Break

4:15-4:45 COMFREL demonstration: parallel vote count and analysis

4:45-5:45 *Evaluation Exercise*

Working groups:

evaluation of election activities (what worked well, what could have worked better) for each coalition

list of main lessons learned

5:45-6:15 *Conclusion*

Keith Jennings (NDI):

summary of the day's events

discussion of the importance of the evaluation process for EMOs

6:30 Group dinner. NICFEC voter education performance.

Friday, October 2

8:00-8:30 *Opening*

Keith Jennings (NDI):

review of conference agenda and objectives

8:30-9:30 *Roundtable: Post-election environment*

Each coalition (COFFEL, COMFREL, NICFEC) will discuss (*15 minutes each*):

effect of post-election environment on decision to pursue new coalition activities -- what they may or may not be allowed to do

effect of current environment on types of future activities pursued

questions and concerns about continuing as a coalition

9:30-10:30 *NGO Sustainability: Where do we go from here?*

1) Damaso G. Magbual of NAMFREL and Kapil Shrestha of NEOF, presentation (15 minutes each):

activities pursued in other countries between elections

the transition process from an election monitoring organization to a new organization

challenges to managing relationship between member NGOs and the coalition

2) Open discussion on possible objectives, programs, and mechanisms for sustaining EMOs

10:30-10:45 Break

10:45-12:00 *Working Groups: Defining your organization*

1) Keith Jennings: debriefing about the purpose of the working groups and the exercise

2) Working groups: brainstorming objectives, goals, and parameters of each coalition using a training exercise: "defining your organization: identity, organization, and results" (SWOT Analysis)

12:00-2:00 Lunch

2:00-4:00 *Working Groups: Plan of action*

1) Working groups: development of a draft "plan of action" for each coalition

2) Presentation of working group results to all seminar participants

4:00-4:15 Break

4:15-5:00 *Challenges facing EMOs in Asia and the AMN*

1) Keith Jennings: summary of the day's events

2) Final discussion:

opportunity for all participants to identify overarching themes of the conference and lessons learned

mechanisms to strengthen communication between EMOs in emerging democracies, set up support systems, and share experiences/advice

- 5:00-5:30 *Closing*
All participants: assessment of the conference and completion of a conference evaluation tool
- 5:30-6:30 Informal Discussion
- 6:30 Group Dinner

