

# **CENTER FOR DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE**

*"...promoting the transition to and consolidation of democratic regimes throughout the world."*

## **MANAGING ASSISTANCE IN SUPPORT OF POLITICAL AND ELECTORAL PROCESSES**



**January 2000**

**Technical Publication Series**

**Center for Democracy and Governance  
Bureau for Global Programs, Field Support, and Research  
U.S. Agency for International Development  
Washington, DC 20523-3100**

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## **ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION**

This elections manual is an update of the Center's *Managing Democratic Electoral Assistance: A Practical Guide for USAID* published in 1995. It is based on a series of studies in four key areas of assistance: political party development, elections administration, local elections, and post-elections. While these assistance areas are interrelated, each represents a discrete set of issues. In addition, these studies were informed by a series of nine case studies, covering the spectrum of the assistance areas across the USAID-defined geographic regions.

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## **ABOUT THE CENTER**

The Center for Democracy and Governance is the U.S. Agency for International Development's focal point for democracy and governance programming. The Center's role is to provide USAID and other development practitioners with the technical and intellectual expertise needed to support democratic development. It provides this expertise in the following areas:

- **Rule of Law**
- **Elections and Political Processes**
- **Civil Society**
- **Governance**



## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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### **Management Systems International**

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MSI is a woman-owned management consulting firm whose core and recognized expertise is in managing policy change, performance measurement and evaluation, institutional development, mainstreaming gender considerations, and training. The firm applies this core expertise to the areas of democracy and governance, private sector development, and environment and natural resources, particularly in countries and regions in transition. MSI, established in 1981, is based in Washington, DC.

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# MANAGING ASSISTANCE IN SUPPORT OF POLITICAL AND ELECTORAL PROCESSES

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*Managing Assistance in Support of Political and Electoral Processes* aims to help democracy and governance (DG) field officers anticipate and effectively deal with the myriad issues and challenges that arise as they design and manage election assistance programs in transitional environments. This practical manual guides users through a series of key steps: defining the problem and assessing contextual factors, identifying stakeholders and their motives, selecting options for assistance, linking those options to the mission strategy, and managing electoral assistance. It is suggestive rather than directive, in recognition that, while there exists a certain “conventional wisdom” about elections programming drawn from years of experience, the number of variables involved precludes a “one size fits all” approach. This publication also serves as a subsector-specific follow-up to the Center for Democracy and Governance’s *Conducting a DG Assessment: A Framework for Strategy Development (Advance Copy)* [December 1999], designed to guide field officers in assessing a country’s overall DG problem(s) and strategic options for assistance. *Managing Assistance in Support of Political and Electoral Processes* takes off from that publication into specific elections and political processes guidance, principally in the area of competition.

Free and fair elections are indispensable to democracy. Although other elements of democracy can develop before competitive elections are held, a country cannot be truly democratic until its citizens have the opportunity to choose their representatives. Elections can be a primary tool to expand political openings and increase citizens’ political participation, offering political parties and civic groups an opportunity to mobilize and organize supporters and develop alternative platforms. If there is real interest in democratization and systemic reform, then missions cannot afford to ignore the electoral process.

Quite clearly, no two elections are alike; each requires a tailored response on the part of the mission and its partners. Nevertheless, a significant number of useful practices and lessons have emerged from USAID election programs, so that possible approaches can be suggested for the various substantive areas of electoral processes. The approaches suggested in this handbook are based on material gathered through a year-long assessment of electoral assistance activities, carried out by USAID Missions and their partners over the past eight years. Each approach stresses two fundamental elements that condition and are equally critical to any potential intervention—the context and objectives for the assistance.

At the outset, it will be necessary to clearly define the problem at hand and to assess the context for assistance. Although the need for problem definition is perhaps all too obvious, not infrequently little attention is actually paid to diagnosing or identifying the nature of the problem and how financial or technical support can aid in its solution. Clearly, the benefits of thorough problem definition lie in better solutions as well as more efficient and effective technical assistance. Since elections do not occur in a vacuum, context will be a key factor in deciding what type of activity or combination of activities is appropriate and feasible. In assessing context, DG field officers should consider the type of election, the configuration of the political environment, social-cultural factors, the economic situation, institutional issues, and security concerns.

Once DG officers have defined the problem at hand and assessed the context for assistance, they need to take into account who wants assistance and why. They also need to understand that, as the number of potential stakeholders increases, so too will the variance in interests and motives. While the Center would prefer that all elections and political processes assistance be incorporated into a broader DG strategy in each mission and not just event-driven programming, we recognize that political and fiscal realities may

preclude such integration. As a result, it is important to recognize that there are multiple factors that motivate assistance in the area of elections and political processes, and that many of the activities worth doing well should be integrated into a mission's longer-term strategy.

The overtly political nature of elections and political party development assistance tends to elevate such programming. In addition to mission attentiveness, it is likely that the U.S. Embassy will play a significant role in the programs' design and implementation. Political factors within each country as well as the Washington political environment will define the context within which elections assistance is undertaken.

By focusing on the interests driving elections assistance, a simple framework for developing election support assistance emerges: those activities related to changes in the immediate political environment that result in elections programming are short-term and event-driven assistance, while those activities associated with more developmental objectives are classified as long-term assistance. Consistent with this understanding, this manual has adopted the following framework for assistance:

*Short-term (event-driven) assistance* seeks to assure that the outcome of a particular election is valid, that the process is accepted, that it is viewed as credible by key domestic and international stakeholders, and that the immediate election produces a credible result.

*Long-term (institutionalizing) assistance* is developmentally oriented. It seeks to construct or strengthen those institutions and actors involved in the electoral process, either as managers and implementers (election commissions, monitoring groups, the judiciary) or as participants (political parties, candidates, civil society). The primary concern is with strengthening the electoral process *per se* in order to make it a sustainable endeavor in the long term.

Before developing a plan for electoral assistance, the DG field officer should begin examining opportunities for assistance. Assistance can be given in support of national elections, local elections, the post-election period, and/or political party development. For the purposes of this discussion, national election assistance refers to aid given in anticipation of a particular electoral event at the national level. This would include parliamentary and presidential elections, but might extend to a national or constitutional referendum, a plebiscite, or elections to a constituent assembly.

Local election assistance is primarily concerned with the accountability of local officials. The local election process can be more complicated than the national, presenting unique challenges for election managers, political actors, and assistance providers. While the general sub-categories of assistance are the same as those for national elections, they reflect the distinguishing features of local elections. For example, if local decision-making bodies are to be elected for the first time, assistance providers may be faced with creating, rather than modifying, a legal framework.

An often overlooked opportunity for offering assistance is post-election. Post-election assistance occurs immediately after an election, and before seating of the new legislature or government. This category of assistance is aimed at facilitating a smooth political transition by providing a flexible funding mechanism for a variety of activities that must begin immediately after elections. These activities may be directed at establishing and strengthening the legal framework of, familiarizing political actors with, building public confidence in, and minimizing threats to the new political system. Post-election assistance serves as a means of upholding the momentum for reform, demonstrating a sustained U.S. commitment, providing an opportunity for relationship building, and positively influencing the stability of the new political system.

Support for political party development outside of the electoral context is an important facet of democratization efforts.

It is imperative that assistance programs take into account the role and character of political parties. This manual explores some of the most basic and important political party functions and how external assistance can be used most effectively to enhance their effectiveness and sustainability. Viewed through the lens of the framework, short-term assistance focuses on “leveling the political playing field” and providing for greater political competition. Long-term assistance, however, places its attention on building the organization and governance capacity of political parties. It is important to recognize that political party development assistance is an important aspect of political party assistance that occurs outside of the limited elections arena.

In addition to these immediate contextual factors, the broader donor environment is also important. In this regard, the DG field officers should take into account U.S. policy considerations, program priorities/strategic objectives, available resources, the capabilities of institutional partners, and issues of timing. Coordination with other donors is also a crucial part of elections administration. It is likewise important to incorporate and support indigenous initiatives, rather than relying solely on donor-initiated activities. Working with local partners that are invested in the electoral process will facilitate making program goals more sustainable.

At the point that assistance moves from the conceptual to the implementation phase (to be undertaken by USAID’s cooperating partners), the focus of the DG officer will turn to the management of electoral assistance. The range of issues central to effective management includes conditioning factors, such as the timing of assistance, the ability of the mission to manage the proposed activities, and the receptivity of the host-country government; cooperation with other U.S. agencies; work with institutional partners; funding mechanisms; and donor coordination. The manual details the impacts these factors have on successful electoral assistance. Chief among these is the need for a policy dialogue with host-country governments, which contributes to establishing or strengthening political will supportive of these programs. In addition, with tight budgets and scarce resources, it is important to develop programming and activities that reinforce previous or ongoing programs and reforms, and that do not make countries dependent on donor governments to sustain their electoral systems. Funding should also be commensurate with program objectives. Finally, the likelihood of effecting change is increased if there are several complementary activities rather than a single activity.

A number of programmatic lessons have also emerged, including some the Center would like to stress:

- With elections assistance, it is advisable to have different organizations providing the assistance and monitoring the assistance.
- Elections monitoring should not be performed under a contract implementing mechanism.
- In an effort to avoid duplication, it is preferable to have a very limited number of groups performing elections observation.

We hope that this document provides the reader with a clearer understanding of managing assistance in support of electoral and political processes.



# I. INTRODUCTION

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## A. Purpose of This Manual

This manual is intended to serve as a practical guide in the development of electoral and political processes programs and activities by democracy and governance (DG) field officers. It will help them frame election issues in newly emerging or still consolidating democracies in a broader democratic and political perspective. It will also assist them to anticipate and think through the problems and complexities that inevitably arise, so as to address them more systematically through programmatic solutions.

Free and fair elections are indispensable to democracy. Although other elements of democracy can develop before competitive elections are held, a country cannot be truly democratic until its citizens have the opportunity to choose their representatives. Elections can be a primary tool to expand political openings and increase citizens' political participation, offering political parties and civic groups an opportunity to mobilize and organize supporters and develop alternative platforms with the public. If there is a real interest in democratization and systemic reform, then missions cannot afford to ignore the electoral process.

Quite clearly, no two elections are alike; each requires a unique response on the part of a mission and its partners. Nevertheless, a significant number of useful practices and lessons have emerged from USAID election programs, so that possible approaches can be suggested for the various substantive areas of electoral processes. The approaches suggested in this handbook are based on material gathered through a year-long assessment of electoral assistance activities, carried out by USAID Missions and their partners over the past eight years.

At least two caveats apply here: first, handbooks, manuals, and guides frequently suffer from a temptation to adopt the “one size fits all” approach and may become highly prescriptive. There is no such effort here. Though structured as a handbook, this manual is meant to be suggestive, not directive. It is recognized that many of the approaches found useful in one set of electoral environments will be less than helpful in another. Constraints and conditions for the implementation of assistance will be major determinants for which suggestions are useful and which are not. Second, a common pitfall is the temptation to be exhaustive—which is clearly not the case here. With those two caveats in place, to the extent that the approaches and suggestions herein are helpful, the manual will have served its purpose.

## B. Structure of the Manual

The manual takes the reader through the various steps involved in the development, management, and reporting of activities in support of political and electoral processes. It is confined to those areas most pertinent to the design, implementation, and management of activities in the field. It is written from the point of view of what the DG officer needs to know and to take into consideration when designing elections activities. This publication also serves as a subsector-specific follow-up to the Center's *Conducting a DG Assessment: A Framework for Strategy Development (Advance Copy)* [December 1999], designed to guide field officers in assessing a country's overall DG problem(s) and strategic options for assistance. *Managing Assistance in Support of Political and Electoral Processes* moves into more specific elections and political processes guidance, principally in the area of competition. Competition is the instrument by which popular sovereignty is tested and implemented, and it is the instrument by which power is checked and balanced. The most obvious, but not the only, form of political competition is free, fair, and regular multi-party elections.

The manual is divided into six sections and three appendices. Section I introduces the publication with an overview of the manual's purpose and structure. It also outlines a systematic approach for defining elections assistance programs.

The next section examines problem definition and assessment of the context for assistance. It is often said that, if the problem is clearly and precisely defined, the solution will be obvious. While this adage is perhaps exaggerated, careful analysis of the problem is extremely important. Problems relating to the electoral context present in a particular country may be analyzed as political events in the short term or as elements of a longer-term process of democratization. While the preferred approach is the latter, it is often the case that elections assistance is precipitated by the election event rather than through the strategic planning process. The next step is developing a clear view of contextual factors affecting elections and elections assistance, e.g., the state of the electoral system, the type of election proposed, competitiveness of local politics, and institutional capacity for managing electoral processes.

Section III follows by exploring the objectives of elections assistance. It examines who is looking for assistance and why. By examining the stakeholders, you may be better able to target your assistance efforts to the activities that are most likely to succeed.

Section IV, the largest section of the manual, addresses the problem of defining and assessing options for assistance. A common framework is used for the discussion of national election assistance, and moves through an examination of options for assistance in support of the legal framework, election management, voter education, election observation, and complaint resolution. This is followed by an overview of approaches and options for local and post-elections assistance. Activities in support of party development are also discussed. Throughout this section, feasibility questions,

comparative approaches to assistance and program examples are highlighted. In addition, lessons learned from past programming in each area of assistance are presented.

Section V recognizes that the optimal strategy from an analytical standpoint is not necessarily optimal from a practical one. Donors also have interests, are constrained by institutions, and have resource trade-offs. The final set of issues that must be taken into consideration in weighing possibilities for elections assistance are those driven by the broader donor environment.

The final section of the manual addresses management issues, covering such elements as capacity for management of election assistance activity, timing of assistance, cooperation with other U.S. agencies, management of implementing partners, and donor coordination.

Finally, the three appendices provide an overview of tools for electoral assistance, comparative assistance options based on context, and essential political party functions and associated skills.

### **C. A Systematic Approach For Defining Elections Assistance Programs**

Since elections assistance is generally provided to address some perceived concern or difficulty with either a country's electoral system or a particular election and its possible outcome, this manual adopts an overall problem-solving approach. The approach is one that moves in an orderly way, from defining the objectives for assistance and the problem to be addressed to defining and assessing options, managing and implementing the options selected, and finally to monitoring and measuring impact of the assistance provided. At the same time, however, the approach stresses two fundamental elements that condition and are equally critical to any potential intervention—the context and objectives for the assistance.

## II. DEFINING THE PROBLEM

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Before developing a plan for electoral assistance, there must be some assessment and definition of the problem to be addressed. Although the need for problem definition is perhaps obvious, not infrequently little attention is actually paid to diagnosing or identifying the nature of the problem and how financial or technical support can aid in its solution. Clearly, the benefits of thorough problem definition lie in better solutions as well as more efficient and effective technical assistance; however, it is just as clear that conditions do not always permit thoroughness. In certain cases, urgency or time constraints will not allow for a thorough assessment of the problem, while in others there will not be sufficient resources, either human or financial, available for more than a cursory or informal examination of the problem.

Nevertheless, the first step—defining the elections and political processes problem—should come first in time as well as in concept. What are the primary problems for elections and political processes work? After this “first cut” at the problem, the analysis will move to identifying the allies and opponents of reforms, and what resources and strategies they bring to the struggle.

Perhaps more than in any other area of democracy assistance, elections assistance is influenced by short-term political considerations. It is often the case that missions have relatively short-time horizons in which to plan elections assistance. This reality has consequences for defining the problem(s) at hand, given that problems need sufficient time to be addressed. While it is preferable that elections assistance be developed with longer strategic goals in mind, it is important to develop elections assistance programming that takes into

consideration time and resource constraints. As a result, problem definition must also reflect these constraints. In the short term, DG officers must identify those problems that have realistic and deliverable solutions, and recognize that what is done in the short term may have consequences for and impact on the long term.

### A. Approaches to Defining the Problem

There are two general ways in which a problem might be assessed. A first approach to problem definition is through a *diagnostic approach*. This is a more formal assessment that may be either a comprehensive or a relatively rapid appraisal. The diagnostic approach benefits from some sort of systematic examination of the election context. It identifies those areas where interventions are needed to strengthen the process and the institutions responsible for managing and implementing elections. Frequently, this type of assessment is a precursor to longer-term interventions. For instance, in order to improve the effectiveness of the local election commission, it may be necessary to do a formal organizational survey that includes interviews with key personnel and stakeholders, a review of past performance, and resource analysis. While such formal assessments are much more expensive, these costs are frequently compensated by a more successful, better-targeted intervention and the likelihood that capacities developed will be more sustainable.

Formal assessments often require substantial lead-time. A full diagnostic of the electoral system should only take a few weeks to complete (from drafting a scope of work and contracting it, to undertaking a field assessment and producing the final report) before useful results can be expected. They generally require multiple-member teams and more management effort on the part of the mission officer before arriving at the intervention.

Frequently contributing to the degree of an assessment's complexity is the amount of knowledge actually available about the election system in question. In systems undergoing transition, little may be known or data and knowledge may be highly dispersed. In such cases, the process of developing a clear idea of the state of the system can be time-consuming.

When there is insufficient time to perform a full diagnostic, using the best available information and judgement may be the best (if not only) way to assess the situation and define the problem. Such a definition assumes that there is a need and that the need is important. While such a problem definition does not have the benefit of formal assessment, it is possible to carry out some informal effort to validate the need and importance of the proposed activity. Interviews with local knowledgeable people (from universities, interest groups, parties, the media, etc.) about needs, priorities, and available resources for carrying out such activities can be helpful in assessing both the feasibility and the usefulness of the proposed activity. Likewise, conversations with other donors might also produce useful insights or perhaps be suggestive of minor modifications to improve chances for the intervention's success.

## **B. Assessing the Context for Assistance**

Election administration is not a neutral subject, especially the development of an electoral framework. The definition of the rules of the game and how power will be contested will be of great interest to many actors within a country. Similarly, electoral systems do not start from scratch—there is always a set of pre-existing institutions, customs, laws, and procedures that influences how electoral assistance activities will play out. Developing a clear picture of the institutional and political context and how each can or will affect proposed assistance is key to the design of effective interventions.

The choice of voting system and the types of offices to be elected are an extremely important part of the election context. What offices are being elected—executive or legislative? If the latter, will proportional representation or a majoritarian system be used? There are different levels of complexity associated with each type of voting system and election. Majoritarian (first-past-the-post, single-member district) systems, for example, are more straightforward than proportional representation. The selection of one system over another will affect the chances of one political party over another and, therefore, will be hotly debated. Finally, elections to all types and/or levels of office might be held simultaneously, or they could be conducted separately.

### *1. Categories of Elections<sup>1</sup>*

Categorizing elections is helpful in that it suggests a shorthand description of the political and historic juncture into which the election fits. It points to the types of contextual issues that are likely to require attention, and possibly to the kinds of assistance that may be appropriate.

*Post-conflict elections* occur in the aftermath of war or civil conflict. They are often part of a negotiated peace settlement. Elections may be marred by outbreaks of violence in violation of a ceasefire. Issues surrounding this type of election usually include demobilization and disarming of combatants, and the establishment of new public security forces.

*Breakthrough elections* are the first, and sometimes second, round of elections after a lengthy period of authoritarian, one-party, or

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<sup>1</sup> See David Hirschmann and Johanna Mendelson, *Managing Electoral Assistance: A Practical Guide for USAID*, Center for Democracy and Governance, USAID: Washington, D.C., 1995, p. 10. While much of this section is owed to Hirschmann and Mendelson, pp. 6-7, their content is more of an elaborated set of categories.



military rule. They mark a shift to a constitutional government based on civilian rule and competitive elections. There is often considerable uncertainty and disagreement on how electoral rules (should) operate. A country may slip back into authoritarian rule during this phase.

*Consolidating elections* are the third or fourth round of elections, which serve to advance the process of democratization, and have in some measure become routine. There remains some uncertainty and a need to strengthen the elections process further and to widen and deepen participation. Assistance centers on maximizing performance and building institutional capacity. Efforts to refine election legislation, to introduce technological or procedural innovations, and to improve strategic planning and organizational management are likely to result in changes at the operational level that could benefit from assistance.

*Procedural elections* are regular elections held in accordance with times and procedures set out in the constitution; the institutions are relatively mature and capable and the rules relatively well understood and accepted. There may be little reason to provide assistance to procedural elections.

Local elections can be complicated, as a result of the higher number of candidates, the number of elections taking place and variations in legal requirements, voting systems, and differences in administrative practice between districts. In some cases, local elections may be held on a rolling basis. If local and national elections are held at the same time, inconsistencies between local and national election laws and procedures may arise. While there may be some benefits to the simultaneous conduct of elections (such as cost), it presents a myriad of other challenges to candidates, election managers, and voters.

## 2. *Political Considerations*

It is in the area of electoral assistance, perhaps more than any other DG assistance area, that politics matters most. Elections are not merely a technical matter. They are inherently very political, so the political environment will have a major impact on the conditions under which an election will be carried out, how the election will be implemented, the competitiveness of the election, and its significance.

The competitiveness of the system will also affect the significance and legitimacy of the election. If a single party is dominant or the opposition is too weak or splintered to challenge the ruling party's power, elections may be perceived as of little importance, or worse, as illegitimate. Dominance of a single party or glaring inequities between parties in terms of resources and capabilities can contribute to raising distrust and tension. High levels of tension and distrust between political parties can lead to campaign violence, a boycott of elections, or attempts to discredit the election by the loser. Elections may need to be canceled altogether. From another perspective, polarization and fragmentation will also undermine the prospects for the development of stable and sustainable coalitions in the legislature. Actions such as an election boycott make it difficult for donors to provide assistance without appearing partisan. Even assistance to election commissions bodies and election observation efforts may be seen as favoring the incumbent regime.

Frequently, traditional patron-client networks may also entrench or reinforce the disparities between political parties. The hierarchical distribution of rewards, patronage, and protection from the top in return for support from below may create strong vertical alliances or political pacts between politicians and religious leaders, union organizers, factory-owners, landlords, tribal chiefs, or clan leaders. These networks also tend to limit the role of rank and file party

members as well as the electorate in choosing representatives. The designation of candidates may be so tightly controlled by elites as to make the actual election simply an endorsement rather than a real choice. Not all parties, however, operate in this manner. Political party development assistance programs can serve to create and sustain viable democratic parties that represent and serve diverse constituencies.

Since the political balance in most societies is made up of competing interests, it is important to determine the range of outlets for political participation and expression. In democratic or democratizing societies, there is a wide range of organizations outside political parties capable of representing and mobilizing interests and demands. These civil society interest groups (e.g., ethnic, religious, or linguistic groups, labor unions, consumer groups, business associations, the military, or students) can be powerful counterbalances and/or allies to political parties and highly influential in setting policy agendas.

At the same time, such organizations are not substitutes for political parties in a democratic society. Civil society organizations serve as challenging groups, but have no responsibility for governance or for political opposition within government. Only political parties serve these functions. Consequently, they are indispensable elements in democratic societies.

Where interest groups are allowed to flourish, their capacity and willingness to deliver certain constituencies may spell victory or defeat. While many (if not most) interest groups are not allied with specific political parties, they do have policy points of view, which frequently coincide with those of particular political parties. In many countries, interest groups are also important sources of campaign financing and have been given a corresponding measure of influence in both parties and government. In more traditional societies, such groups tend to be limited to political and economic elites. One should be

aware, then, of whether or not the balance of civil society groups tends to favor the interests of one party rather than another, and if these interests are lined up with the government or with the opposition. In this particular context, it is important that the mission coordinate its elections and political processes programming with any ongoing civil society programming.

### *3. Social/Cultural Factors*

Social and cultural factors have important implications for the management of elections and provision of assistance. In all emerging democratic political environments, the extension of voting rights to previously disenfranchised groups may be key to the legitimacy of an election. Where legal guarantees exist but are not uniformly implemented or enforced, additional efforts may be necessary to ensure the meaningful participation of previously marginalized groups. Extension of the franchise may be a requirement of a negotiated peace agreement or represent the expectations of the international diplomatic and donor communities. But meeting these requirements may imply the need to introduce a new voting system.

Bringing previously excluded groups into the process is not an easy task. Years of distrust will probably breed suspicion among those groups for whom solutions are proffered. Opposition can also be provoked among other segments of society that initially did not want those groups included. If concessions are offered to one group, but not another that feels equally marginalized, problems of another dimension will be generated.

Significant differences in language, literacy, urban/rural populations, tradition, and gender all pose challenges to effective election management. If there is more than one important language group, campaign, voter education, and election materials (such as ballots) will need to be prepared for each. Illiterate populations

require more human contact and illustrative information during the voter registration process and throughout the election campaign. Illiterate populations are often concentrated in remote areas with little media or outside access. In general, a widely dispersed rural population tends to have fewer resources, to be less educated, to have less access to information, and to present significant logistical problems for elections organizers. Urban areas, on the other hand, are likely to have numerous sources of information, a better resource base, and a higher degree of political sophistication and activism among the electorate. They are also easily reached by electoral authorities.

Where custom and tradition are deeply rooted, familial, tribal, religious, or clan affiliations can have a significant impact on voting patterns. In

some contexts, traditional leaders may be satisfied with a symbolic role, while in others a substantive role will be expected. Candidates frequently bargain with traditional leaders to secure their endorsement and the votes of the clan or its followers in exchange for some benefit, such as an appointed office. Election managers and donor agencies will also need to take into consideration cultural norms that dictate what is deemed appropriate and acceptable with respect to the campaigns and elections process.

Cultural norms may present a particular problem with respect to women’s participation in patriarchal societies. Even if women have the right to vote, they may still be limited by voter registration requirements such as property ownership or employment. Husbands may not permit their wives to vote or may influence their choices, enforcing them through such practices as proxy or open/family voting. Women may also limit their own participation out of fear.

<p><b>DIAGNOSTIC QUESTIONS</b>  <b>Box ONE: POLITICAL/SOCIAL/CULTURAL FACTORS</b></p>
<p>What political and voting rights are enshrined in the law?</p>
<p>Is there a history or tradition of multi-party competition and fair elections?</p>
<p>To what extent is the political system open?</p>
<p>Is there a level playing field?</p>
<p>What is the significance of the elections? Are the offices to be elected meaningful ones?</p>
<p>How polarized are the political parties? Is campaign violence or a boycott possible?</p>
<p>What impact will traditional patron-client networks have? Special interest groups?</p>
<p>Are there opportunities for political participation outside of political parties, e.g., special interest groups?</p>
<p>To what extent does the government support electoral institutions? To what extent is government receptive to assistance to electoral institutions?</p>

#### 4. *Economic Situation*

The state of a country’s economy may have an important effect on elections. Elections cost a great deal of money. The ability of a government to pay the cost of staffing, commodities, and services required is key to effective election management. Because of lack of experience, planners frequently underestimate the cost of conducting competitive elections. Worse, legislatures may make drastic cuts in the national budget allocation for elections.<sup>2</sup> Legislatures have also been known to incorporate significant modifications to an election law with little or no consideration of implied costs, causing an “unfunded mandate” of sorts for election authorities. Although one or more donors may assist in funding some of the “big-ticket” items or in making up a shortfall,

<sup>2</sup> Hirschmann and Mendelson, p. 10.

such assistance is rarely given for more than one or two elections. At the end of the day, a national government is responsible for funding the conduct of elections in full compliance with legal requirements.

In ideal terms, assistance for elections should be in accordance with the funding capacities of the country. In some instances large-scale assistance may create unrealizable expectations on the part of local authorities and citizens. In cases where donors have been extremely generous with assistance for post-conflict or breakthrough elections, such as in Mozambique in 1994, support for subsequent elections may appear meager in comparison, and election authorities may find they need to reduce their expectations significantly regarding what can be done for the elections. When developing assistance programs, donors should think carefully about the institutions, structures, and systems they will promote, create, and install and try to make sure that they are congruent with the carrying capacity of the host-country government—both in financial and human resource terms.

Economic malaise may also affect elections somewhat less directly. Economic decline may cause maintenance on basic infrastructure to be deferred or ignored. Roads may deteriorate to the point that they become impassable, thus impeding the distribution of voter information and election materials. Power outages may leave a large proportion of the population without electricity or telephones, impeding the work of elections offices, the dissemination of political and voter information messages via radio or television, or as has happened in some countries, even disrupting the vote count. All of these can easily extend the time needed for elections preparations and the determination of results. It also raises the cost of elections should it be necessary to purchase generators, battery powered light sources, or radio equipment.

## 5. *Institutional Issues*

The reform and management of electoral processes is carried out by government institutions. The condition and capacity of these institutions to implement changes and fulfill their responsibilities are critical to a smooth, efficient, and effective election process. While the country's election commission may be nominally in charge of the process, it will more than likely be dependent on an array of other institutions to perform a variety of tasks directly and indirectly related to the election. Except in unusual cases,<sup>3</sup> the election commission has little control or authority over these other institutions and is dependent on them to perform their tasks in a timely and effective manner. Before embarking on activities that require the support and actions of government, the USAID planner would be well advised to take a very close look at the capacity and capabilities not only of those officially designated for election management but others less directly involved.

Governmental institutions in emerging democracies frequently suffer from multiple problems such as low status, inadequate budgets, corrupt or unprofessional officials, poorly trained and badly paid staff, or poorly maintained facilities. Some government institutions, frequently because of the lack of budget resources, are little more than shells. Staff is nominally assigned but may be mostly absent or not have the resources to carry out their responsibilities. They may not be paid for weeks or months at a time. All these elements will have a significant impact on the capability and incentive of government institutions to carry out needed reforms and to perform tasks in an

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<sup>3</sup> In Costa Rica, the Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones is given significant authority over other government institutions and command of the country's security forces 60 days prior to the election.

effective manner. Consider the following:

- If the country's legislature is inefficient or lacks the capability for sound technical analysis or legislative/regulatory drafting, then reform of the legal framework for elections will proceed slowly if at all. Or, reforms may be poorly drafted and incapable of being implemented, or may even be unconstitutional.
- If the courts are corrupt or overloaded, there will be difficulties in presenting and processing complaints of election law violations. If judges are not trained in election law, then the resulting decisions will likely be controversial and/or overturned by higher courts. In a quick-paced elections atmosphere this could have a huge impact on the elections. In some countries, election law is so arcane that it requires highly informed specialists to understand the procedures to present a complaint successfully. Not infrequently, none are available.
- Where civil registry offices are understaffed and under-budgeted, adequate information on which to base a voter registry may be unavailable. Files may not be maintained in adequate or orderly condition, thus impeding accessibility.
- Beyond weak organizational capacities, governmental institutions responsible for election management and administration may lack the autonomy and independence necessary to administer elections in a credible fashion. Election commissions may be autonomous or highly integrated into the government structure. They may be partisan, non-partisan, or mixed with

respect to their membership. As long as the structure of an election commission does not favor one party over another, a partisan or mixed membership election commission can carry out elections professionally. Election commissions will be either permanent or temporary bodies and their duties may be executive or policy-oriented. The level of impartiality, efficiency, and accountability of the commission, and the degree to which it operates in a transparent manner will be major determinants of whether or not the electorate and election contestants trust the integrity of the process and accept the legitimacy of the results. As official institutions, election commissions may pose a particular challenge with respect to relationship building from such perspectives as national sovereignty, institutional mandate, and professional sensitivities.

**DIAGNOSTIC QUESTIONS**  
**Box Two: INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES**

Does the elections commission have the resources and capacity to carry out the election?

What other government agencies/offices are responsible for assisting in election preparations? Resources? Capabilities?

Is there concern that these agencies/offices will not be open, responsive, and accountable?

Are staff members competent and adequately trained? Are they being paid? Is corruption a problem?

Are responsible institutions having difficulty putting election legislation and procedural reforms into effect?

Is the elections commission an independent entity with autonomous power and funding to administer elections?

## 6. *Civil Society Organizations*

Civil society organizations (CSOs) play a variety of roles with respect to elections and political processes. First, by working with political parties to get their issues on the agenda or party platform, they provide key links between government and citizens.

Second, they can play an important role in facilitating the electoral process. While governmental institutions generally provide the bulk of effort for elections, other organizations in democratic societies, such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or the media, are also important to the implementation of effective electoral processes. NGOs are often used as the base for election monitoring. In some countries, NGOs are well developed with considerable management capability and are able to take on tasks such as monitoring and voter education quickly and easily. In others, NGOs and CSOs are repressed or undeveloped. The effort needed to develop the appropriate capability in these NGOs for election-related activities may be substantial and time-consuming. Nonetheless, in the absence of institutions available to provide voter education and/or domestic monitoring, development of NGOs to serve in these capacities may be the only viable option. They can also serve to oversee the campaign process.

The private media, as an integral element of civil society, can be an important support for election activity, especially where the media is free and relatively competitive. In countries where important elements of the media, whether newspaper, radio, or television, are controlled by the state or narrow interests, it is less useful and could impede the conduct of free and fair elections. In many emerging democracies, radio is by far the most important component of the media. Most of the population will have access to radio, while considerably less to television, and even less to newspaper. In developing

activities for dissemination of voter information, it is important to assess the comparative advantage of each source.<sup>4</sup> For their part, media are important in covering the campaign and informing citizens, not only on the electoral process, but also about the parties, issues, and candidates. Independent media's coverage of the latter is an important counter-balance to strong state-controlled media.<sup>5</sup>

## 7. *Political Parties*

As crucial political institutions in democratic societies, political parties serve to organize, aggregate, and articulate the political interests of citizens in the political arena. Unlike social movements, voluntary associations, interest groups, or other NGOs, political parties have responsibilities for fielding candidates for elective office and, in turn, for governance of the political system or for providing electoral competition and political dialogue.

Developing a multi-party democratic system is a key goal of electoral assistance. The electoral framework may favor one political party, usually the ruling party, over another. More subtle (and in some cases less subtle) manipulation of the media may also result in favoring one political party over another. USAID's assistance to political parties in the electoral context usually focuses on communications, voter participation, campaign strategy/planning, grassroots outreach, candidate recruitment, and mobilizing women and youth. This institution building and training is aimed at improving the ability of political

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<sup>4</sup> Ronald G. Shaiko, *USAID Political Party Development Assistance*, Technical Publication Series (Washington, DC: USAID/Center for Democracy and Governance, April 1999).

<sup>5</sup> Ann Hudock, *The Role of Media in Democracy: A Strategic Approach*, Technical Publication Series (Washington, DC: USAID/Center for Democracy and Governance, June 1999).

parties committed to the democratic process to compete in elections. (Broader political party assistance efforts address internal party democratization and organization, as well as parties in government/governance.) In order to avoid directly or indirectly influencing the outcome of elections, political party assistance activities should be executed in an inclusive fashion and in an equitable manner and should not include direct financial or in-kind support to individual political parties. For more information, please see *USAID Political Party Development Assistance*.

### 8. *Security Concerns*

Whether as a result of war or civil unrest, violence all too often mars elections in transitional environments. There are many levels of violence, some of which can make the prospect of genuine elections untenable. Sometimes, however, elections are arranged as part of a peace process or as a means of reducing tensions or restoring order, such as in the case of the 1999 elections in Indonesia or the 1997 elections in Liberia. Sporadic violence may continue to be a problem throughout the election process—it may be random or targeted with the intent of disrupting the elections or undermining the peace process. Voters, election workers, candidates and political party leaders, domestic monitors, journalists, and international assistance providers may all be at varying degrees of risk. Targeted violence can erode participation and damage recruitment. In El Salvador, the targeting of Christian Democrat mayors and candidates during the 1980s seriously affected the party's ability to recruit candidates and undermined local organization.

The level and intensity of violence present should be assessed to determine its potential impact on the political campaign and electoral process.

#### DIAGNOSTIC QUESTIONS BOX THREE: SECURITY CONCERNS

To what extent will freedoms of speech, association, and movement be affected by the government or by an unstable environment?

Will violent campaigns have an impact on the ability of some political parties? Will they restrict mobilization of campaign workers? Can a free and fair election realistically be held in this environment?

How will the threat of violence affect the recruitment of pollworkers and domestic monitors?

Can election managers effectively plan for and carry out elections under violent conditions or the threat of hostilities?

Will journalists be able to cover and report on the process in any meaningful way?

What role will the military or internal security forces play?

In the face of violence, what are the prospects that foreign assistance will actually make a difference? Will violent acts prevent assistance providers from being able to effectively implement their programs?





### III. OBJECTIVES FOR ELECTIONS ASSISTANCE

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Because foreign donors are not often primary actors themselves, but rather providers of assistance, they need to find political actors or processes to assist. No doubt there are many political actors. The assessment problem is to identify the key actors, the ones who are actually playing the political game in a way that affects the outcome, and to find those whose interests are consistent with democratic reform. The second problem is to identify the interests or objectives of the actors, and the resources and alignments that they employ to advance their interests.

#### A. Stakeholders

Who are the stakeholders? The question of who wants the assistance is of critical importance. Normally, for interventions to be smoothly implemented and successful in achieving their objectives, the assistance must be welcomed or “owned” by those receiving it. It is not always the case that those on the receiving end actually requested or proposed the idea for assistance in the first place. Not infrequently, multiple stakeholders may also want or have an interest in receiving assistance.

As the number of stakeholders increases, so does the probability that their interests and objectives will vary. Consider the following scenario:

Sometimes, particularly in a flush of democratization zeal, suggestions will be made by mission personnel that, while clearly in conformity with USAID objectives, have little chance of being fully accepted by host-country actors and decision-makers. With significant funding behind externally developed ideas, acceptance can be generated. However, it should be remembered that there may be a

cost in terms of diminished ownership and subsequent problems in effective implementation and sustainability.

When there is a sense that assistance is being imposed on the recipients, the chances for successful intervention will likely diminish. As a result, incorporating stakeholders into the initial assessment as well as strategic planning processes has proven to be a more useful route to meaningful elections assistance.

Stakeholders may include host-country governments and political actors, the U.S. government, other bilateral donors, special interest groups, and multi-lateral organizations. Each of these is discussed in greater detail:

#### 1. *Indigenous Stakeholders*

- Host-country governments, especially those with few resources and with a poorly developed or just emerging electoral infrastructure, will frequently request assistance. In these contexts, it is important to help them distinguish between “preferences” and “needs.”
- Other governmental actors such as legislators, election commissioners, or the courts often solicit assistance.
- Host-country political actors, including political parties and civic NGOs, may also request assistance.

One must keep in mind that each of these actors and institutions has its own agenda relating to elections and political processes assistance. It is important to factor in any biases that may enter into the political process.

#### 2. *U.S. Stakeholders*

- The idea for assistance in support of some aspect of elections processes may

come directly from a USAID Mission or from one or another component of USAID/Washington, e.g., the Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI), USAID regional bureaus, etc. Not infrequently, the U.S. Embassy is involved due to the political nature of elections assistance.

- Other U.S. government agencies, such as the U.S. State Department and the National Security Council, have an interest in playing a role in the democratization of countries considered to be in the U.S. national interest.
- Yet another stakeholder is the U.S. Congress, which can mandate electoral assistance to a particular country and can block such assistance. It can also, through shifts in priorities, restructure allocations to facilitate or impede electoral assistance. It can exercise its influence through review and audit of USAID activities.
- Implementing partners, e.g., the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), the International Republican Institute (IRI), and the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES), are strong advocates of elections assistance. Each entity has its own approach to elections assistance as well as its own particular strengths. When designing elections programs, it is important for a mission to factor in the different areas of expertise and approaches offered by each of the partners.

### **3. *International Stakeholders***

Finally, interest in elections assistance may come from international organizations with concern for democratization, such as the United Nations (U.N.), the Organisation for Economic

Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe, and the Organization for American States (OAS). All of these organizations have electoral assistance components, and frequently coordinate with U.S. assistance efforts. Bilateral donors and regional organizations like the European Union may also provide election-related assistance, and missions should seek to coordinate with them.

### **B. *Motives for Assistance***

There are any number of factors that might motivate assistance for elections. Assistance may be provided to help bring about an end to conflict by providing an opportunity for non-violent political competition. It might contribute to the evolution of a more competitive political environment. Support could facilitate greater equity of representation, or it might address concerns about the integrity of the process. It could also be part of an overall package of assistance to enhance, improve, and sustain the institutions necessary for the democratic development of a country.

Elections and political processes assistance differs from other types of democracy assistance (e.g., governance, rule of law, and civil society) in two important ways. First, such assistance tends to be event-driven, i.e., whether part of a broad strategic plan or precipitated by changes in the political environment, most elections assistance programs are targeted at an electoral event—a presidential election, parliamentary election, local election, or referendum. In other areas of democracy assistance, one cannot readily identify analogous events that would factor so greatly into the timing of programs. Second, while the other elements of democracy assistance deal explicitly with governmental actors and institutions as well as non-governmental entities, elections and political processes assistance deals explicitly with the most “political” elements of democratic

societies—elections and political parties. It is important to recognize that there are multiple factors that motivate assistance in the area of elections and political processes. The overtly political nature of elections and political party development assistance tends to elevate such programming. In addition to mission attentiveness, it is likely that the embassy will play an important role in the design and implementation of such programs. Political factors within each country as well as the political environment in Washington will define the political context within which elections assistance is undertaken.

Since most problems need long-term attention, the Center would prefer that all elections and political processes assistance be incorporated into a broader DG strategy in each mission. However, the Center recognizes that political and fiscal realities may preclude such integration. Missions with long-term DG “strategic objectives” that include programming to facilitate “more genuine and competitive political processes” (Agency Objective 2.2) are better situated to respond to changes in the political environment surrounding elections. Nonetheless, missions without such objectives are often called upon to engage in elections assistance through short-term programming. The motivating factors for such short-term assistance are often overtly political. Pressures from the host government, indigenous NGOs, or the ambassador, or an appropriation of funds from Washington for election purposes may serve as catalysts for short-term elections programming. The strategic importance of the country may also serve to precipitate funding for elections assistance.

The dramatic changes in Indonesia and Nigeria demonstrate the rapid response to political events that included the influx of millions of dollars of USAID and other international donor support for recent elections. While Nigeria is an extreme example of short-term elections

assistance, mission staffs around the world will be called upon to organize elections programs around unanticipated changes in political environments that provide openings for democratic assistance.

Apart from the political motivations for assistance, there are long-term motivations that stem from the desire to develop a sustainable electoral system within a country. Those include the desire for the critical elements of competition and accountability. It is hoped that elections assistance will be motivated by such long-term commitment to the democratic institutionalization of electoral systems, which build in regular competition and, therefore, accountability to citizenry.

It is important for the DG field officer to recognize that fundamental differences between short- and long-term timeframes can create problems in fitting activities into the mission’s strategic plan. Strategic plans tend to emphasize developmental objectives, and likewise tend to be relatively long term in focus.<sup>6</sup> Much of elections assistance, however, has short-term objectives, many of which do not fit comfortably into a mission’s existing democracy strategy. In certain cases it may be possible to construct a “special objective” for the proposed assistance, but in others the lead-time will be so short that it falls under the category of “emergency assistance.” In fact, the current implementing mechanism for funding elections and political processes assistance through the Center includes a rapid-response component to deal specifically with such short-term programs. The primary problem presented with such types of efforts, aside from fitting with mission strategies and

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<sup>6</sup> A brief examination of the Strategic Framework for Elections and Political Processes for the Agency’s Strategic Plan reveals that relatively few of the proposed intermediate results (IRs) are likely to be met through short-term (i.e., 30-180 days) assistance. The reason is that the IRs are developmentally rather than politically focused.

potential sidetracking and dispersion of resources, is that one may not be able to address the underlying problem (i.e., weak political parties or insufficient time to campaign) in a short timeframe and only deal with the issues at the surface.

### C. A Framework for Assistance

By focusing on the motives driving elections assistance, a simple framework for developing election support assistance emerges: those activities related to changes in the immediate political environment that result in elections programming are short-term and event-driven assistance, while those activities associated with more developmental objectives are classified as long-term (institutionalizing) assistance.

*Short-term (event-driven) assistance* seeks to assure that the outcome of a particular election is valid, that the process is accepted, and that it is viewed as credible by key domestic and international stakeholders. The interest is in the election producing a credible result, although the DG officer must be cognizant of the impact that short-term activities and assistance may have on the electoral process in the long term.

*Long-term (institutionalizing) assistance* is developmentally oriented. It seeks to construct or strengthen those institutions and actors involved in the electoral process, either as managers and implementers (election commissions, monitoring groups, or the judiciary) or as participants (political parties, candidates, or civil society) in the process. Again, the primary concern is with strengthening the electoral process *per se*, with no particular eye to the result—strong and capable institutions that will reliably produce sound and credible results.

With short-term assistance, the process is viewed as a means to an end, i.e., a valid election. Once the anticipated legitimate

outcome is achieved, active concern for the process ends. With long-term objectives, however, there is clear and explicit recognition that a strong, capable electoral process is not necessarily produced with one legitimate election, and the successful implementation of a single election does not necessarily spell the end of assistance. Missions should consider building on short-term assistance to develop longer-term elections and political process strengthening programs as part of an overall DG strategic framework.

Although there are certainly exceptions, short-term, event-driven activities tend to occur in the early stages of transition to democracy. Concerns about the integrity of the process are particularly keen in post-conflict or breakthrough situations. When institutions are new, questions will arise about whether they will work effectively. New institutions are more easily manipulated and errors that lead to distorted results are more likely to occur. There are also worries about whether the process will be acceptable to the general electorate, i.e., one in which it will readily participate. Once past the initial stages of democratization and into consolidation, and especially where there is an incipient record of successful elections, attention tends to shift toward making the process smoother and strengthening the electoral system.

While the distinctions are not always neat, and overlap is not at all uncommon, the activities associated with short- and long-term objectives tend to be different in character, focus, and duration. These distinctions are discussed in greater detail in Section IV. Nevertheless, most activities are characterized by an emphasis on one objective or the other. By clearly defining the objectives, as this framework invites, there will be less likelihood of unwarranted expectations, and more likelihood of achieving appropriate results.

While the Center recognizes that short-term elections assistance programs will continue to emerge, due to changes in political environments, some short-term programming tends not to be sustainable. For example, in order to ensure that an election takes place (especially in a post-conflict election), a donor may put more emphasis on its consultants actually administering the election rather than providing training to host-country nationals who will then be able to administer elections in the future. Another example might be taking the time to build consensus on the electoral framework to ensure local buy-in versus promulgating election rules and regulations without much debate and discussion among the key political actors in a country. Again, this is more apt to happen in a post-conflict election in which donors are quick to push elections to consolidate the peace. Long-term elections assistance, linked to the institutionalization of the electoral system, provides the more fruitful approach to newly democratizing political systems.



## IV. ASSESSING OPTIONS FOR ASSISTANCE

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Before developing a plan for electoral assistance, the DG field officer should begin examining opportunities for assistance. Assistance can be given in support of national elections, local elections, the post-election period, and/or political party development more broadly.

### A. Approaches to National Election Assistance

For the purposes of this discussion, national election assistance refers to aid given in anticipation of a particular electoral event at the national level. This would include parliamentary and presidential elections, but might extend to a national or constitutional referendum, a plebiscite, or election to a constituent assembly. Readers are encouraged to refer to the appendices to this manual, which outline tools for assistance, present comparative assistance options based on contextual factors, and elaborate upon political party functions. An overview of assistance approaches for national elections is provided below. Other useful references are the Administration and Cost of Elections Project website ([www.aceproject.org](http://www.aceproject.org)) and publications listed on International IDEA's website ([www.idea.int](http://www.idea.int)).

#### 1. *Legal Framework*

The *legal framework* for elections refers to the legal standards, methodology, and procedures for organizing elections and fulfilling voting rights. It is typically established in a country's constitution and further clarified and defined in subsequent statutes and regulations known as enabling legislation. In some instances, however, a constitutional referendum may be held at the same time as breakthrough elections or in their

aftermath. And, depending upon timing and other pressures, elections may be conducted according to presidential decree or minimally amended legislation. A complete overhaul of the legal framework, including the drafting of entirely new legislation, may not be feasible until a country moves toward consolidating elections. In any case, the DG officer should recognize that election laws are very political devices, serving to advantage some and disadvantage others. Therefore, developing consensus in-country on the electoral framework may take much time and effort.

In post-conflict environments, there may not be time or capacity to develop legal frameworks. Instead, election commissions may promulgate rules and regulations to conduct elections in the absence of an electoral law.

Countries may employ stand-alone legislation on presidential, parliamentary, and municipal elections or some combination thereof. For example, language on election to legislative bodies, both at the national and local levels, may be incorporated into one law. These laws can be reinforced by other legislation governing voting rights, voter registration, and campaign financing. Portions of mass media law and the administrative code may also come into play. Some countries use universal electoral codes that “bundle” all legal provisions governing campaigns and elections into one piece of legislation. Beyond electoral laws, a democratic electoral process must also have a solid, legal framework that includes freedom of speech and assembly, rights of political parties, and rights of NGOs, as well as freedom of the press.

A central question facing legislators as they draft new constitutions or election laws will be the type of voting system to be employed. The term “voting system” may be applied to a combination of factors including the system of representation (including the use of set-asides to guarantee the representation of some minorities),

**LESSONS LEARNED**  
**NATIONAL ELECTIONS ASSISTANCE:**  
**LEGAL FRAMEWORK ASSISTANCE**

1. It is important to get involved at the outset of the constitutional or legal process of electoral law reform.
2. An open process of debate and consideration of electoral reforms is preferable. Push for public hearings on electoral framework.
3. Legal advisory support to legislative committees has proven to be a successful route to electoral reform.
4. Mobilize NGOs and private sector to advocate for electoral reform.
5. Public education campaigns often serve to galvanize public support for electoral reform.
6. Development of codes of conduct in tense electoral environments has served to be a constructive mechanism to limit violence and electoral fraud.
7. Eleventh hour interventions to reform electoral process have been most effective when seeking to facilitate monitoring of the electoral process.
8. Long-term efforts at legal framework reform often result in the codification of ad hoc (election-specific) laws.
9. Public opinion polling has served to demonstrate strong public support for reform—mandate for change.
10. A multi-pronged approach to influencing the legal framework is preferable (government actors/NGO leaders/media/political parties).
11. No amount of resourcefulness and financial support will overcome an absence of political will on the part of government officials.

threshold requirements, and ballot access requirements. It is often a decision made without due deliberation or with little or no comparative information. Yet, the choice of a voting system will have a profound effect on a country's ability to achieve economic and political reform. It can, for example, have an impact on the growth and consolidation of political parties, the stability of governments, legislative cohesiveness and effectiveness, minority representation, constituency relations, the influence of special interests, the role of extremist groups, and even voter turnout. Debate on the matter can be politically charged. Nonetheless, the sheer number of voting methods and their varying advantages and disadvantages illustrate that no one system is clearly right or always appropriate. Programming that allows for entry into the political debate at the earliest possible

point is preferable to late entry. DG field officers need to concern themselves with the consistency of all legal and constitutional documents governing campaigns and elections (including media law), the clarity of their provisions, and the feasibility of requirements set forth therein. They also need to be mindful that the U.S. model may not be suitable given other contextual issues discussed in the preceding sections. Special attention should also be paid to whether or not proposed modifications to law are likely to achieve the political results intended by its designers, election participants, and/or the international community.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Hirschmann and Mendelson, p. 11.



*a. Short-term assistance*

Elections assistance undertaken for short duration or in close proximity to an electoral event with respect to the legal framework often places an emphasis on

- Expanding and safeguarding voting and political rights and enhancing the integrity of the election process through select amendments to the election law and the preparation of administrative regulations
- Facilitating the constructive engagement of all political participants in the election process and providing for their accountability through the development of codes of conduct
- Securing clear methods of complaint resolution for voters, political parties, and candidates (see Section IV.A.4)
- Facilitating the ability of political parties to campaign freely and to mobilize support for candidates
- Training journalists to cover campaigns, parties, and candidates in a balanced way
- Securing for NGOs as well as political parties the right to monitor the electoral process

Such issues are likely to be viewed as central to the legitimacy of the election's outcome. The aim then is to put into place "rules of the game" that sufficiently provide for a legitimate outcome rather than to work toward attaining an ideal legal framework.

**FEASIBILITY QUESTIONS**  
**BOX ONE: LEGAL FRAMEWORK**

What is the nature and status of the legal framework?

Which institutions have the right of legislative initiative to alter the framework for elections?

Is there enough time for amending election legislation?

How complex is the amendment process?

What are the immediate priorities for modifying the legal framework?

Does the voting system function adequately? If not, does the political will exist to change it?

What are the likely political and operational ramifications of reform?

How transparent and participatory is the reform process?

**PROGRAM EXAMPLES**  
**BOX ONE: LEGAL FRAMEWORK**

In Ukraine, IFES worked with the parliament over an extended period to achieve a comprehensive overhaul of the legal framework for elections. Its role was formally recognized by the parliament, with its advisors functioning as outside counsel. IFES effectively used a series of public opinion polls to build a consensus for reform among political elites. Ultimately, new legislation incorporated many international standards and addressed public concerns in Ukraine. A new voting system was adopted and the role of the central election commission and the judiciary in adjudicating election-related grievances was established.

In Macedonia, NDI undertook an audit and prepared a commentary on the election law. A televised hearing on electoral reforms was subsequently arranged. This represented the first time that civic groups and ruling and opposition parties met, and in such a public manner, to discuss a new election law. A reported 80 percent of the recommendations stemming from this project were adopted.

*b. Long-term assistance*

As a country moves toward consolidating elections, greater opportunities may arise for a comprehensive overhaul of the legal framework for elections. If so, international implementing organizations play a role in

- Broadening and diversifying participation in the debate on election law reform
- Codifying short-term gains in creating or reforming existing legal frameworks
- Undertaking a methodical assessment of election system performance and auditing extant laws governing campaigns and elections
- Providing comparative models and analytical and drafting services in support of the preparation of new laws or a universal electoral code
- Encouraging the institutionalization of practices intended to make the process of election reform more transparent, such as the routine use of public hearings and public notification
- Conducting training to foster the development of legal and regulatory drafting skills among parliamentarians and election managers

The aim is to develop a body of legislation on campaigns and elections that is comprehensive, coherent, and consistent and which most ideally suits the socio-economic context and new political realities of the country in question.

**2. Election Management**

*Election management* refers to the process by which the legal framework is operationalized.

Election practitioners note that organizing credible elections is a highly complicated undertaking that requires not just clear laws and procedures, but also detailed planning, efficient organization, complicated scheduling, intricate monitoring of activities, and meticulous execution.

One of the primary responsibilities of most electoral commissions, and one of particular interest to donor agencies, is voter registration. Most countries' electoral laws require voter registration as a prerequisite for voting. This process is difficult, time-consuming, labor-intensive, and expensive. It has been the source of innumerable problems in many transitional countries, resulting in questions about the integrity of the election process and legitimacy of the election result.

Beyond facilitating the realization of voting rights, the process of voter registration also

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>FEASIBILITY QUESTIONS</b> <b>Box Two: ELECTION MANAGEMENT</b></p> <p>What is the legal mandate of the election commission?</p> <p>What are its institutional characteristics, e.g., temporary, partisan?</p> <p>How susceptible is it to manipulation? How open and accountable is it?</p> <p>What are the capabilities of the election commission and its subordinate structures? What about institutional memory? Has there been a significant turnover of personnel?</p> <p>What system of voter registration (if any) has been used traditionally? Is it adequate?</p> <p>Is the registry relatively accurate and up to date? Has extension of the franchise or population migration affected this? How is it maintained? Is it centralized? Who is responsible for this?</p> <p>Is registration automatic or voluntary?</p>
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## Assistance Approaches At a Glance

### Table 1: Legal Framework

LEGAL FRAMEWORK	SHORT-TERM ASSISTANCE	LONG-TERM ASSISTANCE
1. Broadening and Diversifying Participation in Electoral Reform		Emphasis is placed on building the status and capabilities of political parties and special interest and advocacy groups relative to political/electoral reform and sustaining their access to and constructive interaction with decision-making bodies and opinion leaders. Efforts may also seek to institute such practices as public hearings and public notification as a means of alerting the public to and soliciting input on reforms.
2. Building a Consensus for Electoral Reform		Building a consensus for political/electoral reforms can be done through a variety of methods including public information and advocacy activities and the use of public opinion polls and focus groups. The process by which a consensus is formed and brought to bear on decision-makers takes time, which is why it is usually undertaken as institutionalizing assistance.
3. Assisting in the Amendment Process	Due to the relatively short lead time characteristic of breakthrough elections, it may be impossible to undertake a comprehensive overhaul of the legal framework. Assistance providers may focus on securing key amendments to existing legislation, such as extending the franchise, securing observer rights, and providing for greater transparency and accountability. Comparative information and analytical and legal drafting services may be provided.	
4. Assisting in Regulatory Drafting	Particularly if the election law is vague or contains gaps and when the election management body has little experience in preparing administrative regulations, assistance providers can play a valuable role. They may provide comparative information and analytical/legal drafting services. Some issues <i>may</i> be handled through administrative regulations.	
5. Facilitating the Adoption of Codes of Conduct	In post-conflict and some breakthrough situations, a significant effort will be required to ensure the constructive engagement of all political actors. The threat of violence/boycott by opposition parties can severely undermine the legitimacy of an election. In such environments, assistance providers can help facilitate a routine dialogue between political players and with the election commission. They may also aid in the development/adoption of a code of conduct to establish the "rules of the game" and the commitment of all participants to those rules.	
6. Providing Legal Information/Advice	In some countries, legal advice centers have been set up to provide information on legislation governing campaigns and elections, to collect information on violations of the law, and to offer free legal advice to voters and political participants.	Assistance may be provided to help create legal foundations or support services and build their capabilities.
7. Assessing Election System Performance/ Auditing Election Laws	The relatively short-lead time characteristic of most breakthrough elections does not typically provide for a thorough assessment of the legal framework. Nonetheless, it may be possible for the party institutes and IFES to undertake a preliminary assessment of the political or electoral environment and to make recommendations for essential, i.e., immediate, changes to election law and procedures. Observer missions, as part of their report, may also include recommendations for electoral reforms.	Long-term assistance tends to focus on improving the comprehensiveness, clarity, and consistency of election laws and bringing them into conformity with new political realities. If the political will exists to undertake an overhaul of the legal framework, institutional partners may evaluate election system performance; audit existing constitutional, legal, and regulatory provisions pertaining to campaigns and elections and contextual factors that will have an impact on the feasibility of various reform proposals.
8. Assisting in Legislative Drafting Process		An extensive overhaul of the legal framework will likely mean the adoption of entirely new laws, not just on elections, but also on campaign financing, media and elections, political parties, voter registration, and voting rights. On-site advisors may provide comparative models and analytical and legal drafting services.
9. Training in Legislative and Regulatory Drafting		In cases where a parliament has just been created or where a "rubber-stamp" body has been changed into a decision-making body, legislative drafting skills among its members and staff may be minimal at best. Similarly, many election management bodies have no experience with preparing administrative regulations. To build the capabilities of these institutions, training may be in provided legislative and regulatory drafting.

plays a valuable role in the election management function. It assists election managers in determining the number and location of polling sites, the number of ballots to be printed, the amount of election commodities to be allotted to each polling station, and the number of pollworkers to be recruited and trained. Certainly, the process of voter registration provides the first test of the capacity of election commissions.<sup>8</sup> Some countries have opted to conduct elections without a voter registry, although this decision can have serious ramifications with respect to ballot security and makes the accurate projection of necessary resources difficult.

In addition to responsibilities for voter registration, election commissions often serve many other important functions in the administration of elections. The diversity of structure and responsibility of election commissions should be recognized when designing assistance programs. Some of the additional responsibilities of election commissions include the organization of political party councils or tribunals, campaign finance oversight, boundary delimitation, staffing of the election administration bureaucracies from the national level to the local levels, production of all election materials, and the resolution of election disputes.

*a. Short-term assistance*

Very often, event-driven assistance within the realm of national election management focuses on the basic commodities and organizational tools necessary to administer an election on schedule and in accordance with the law. Given constraints on USAID funds, extensive expenditure on commodities is not favored. The provision of electoral commodities entails certain dangers. One relates to creating a new

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<sup>8</sup> Hirschmann and Mendelson, p. 14.

**PROGRAM EXAMPLE**  
**Box Two: ELECTION MANAGEMENT**

Significant problems with voter registration in Ghana prompted USAID to make a substantial investment aimed at creating a system that was accurate, current, and credible. This project, Supporting the Electoral Process (STEP), was initiated by IFES a year in advance of the opening of registration and some 18 months before the legal deadline for completing the computerized registry. It was comprehensive in nature, involving on-site advising, commodities support, the application of modern technologies, forms development, training, and a public information component. Beyond significantly improving the quality of the registry, the process was made more efficient and secure. Some 60,000 registrars and 80,000 party agents were trained. Ninety percent (9.1 million people) of eligible voters were registered. Political parties were provided with copies of the registry to check for omissions and discrepancies. Observers noted vast improvements relative to previous elections. The impact of this project was considerable, but such efforts can be costly. In this case, the price tag was over \$10 million despite the fact that the cost per voter (\$0.99) was comparatively cheap.

kind of technological dependence through encouraging demands that accord with an industrialized country's notions of elections, which may not be necessary and might not be sustainable or replicable. Furthermore, if there are suspicions of collaboration between USAID and one or more local actors, the handing over of commodities tends to intensify those suspicions. Finally, commodity support tends to raise expectations and standards for future elections that may not be achievable once donor support has waned. The Center recommends putting resources into more sustainable efforts, such as training election administrators or helping to develop the legal framework for elections. However, it is sometimes necessary to procure a range of commodities to facilitate voter registration, process voters at polling sites, and integrate the election management system. In these cases, coordinating with other donors becomes extremely important so as not to

**LESSONS LEARNED**  
**NATIONAL ELECTION ASSISTANCE:**  
**ELECTION MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE**

1. Early assistance to election commissions should include the development of an electoral timeline in order to set priorities and deadlines for completion of necessary tasks for successful elections.
2. As the election administrative bureaucracies in many countries are quite large, providing training in a cascade fashion (training of trainers) helps to reach all levels of election officials in a timely and cost-effective manner.
3. The provision of technology assistance to election commissions to update voter registration processes has generally been viewed by citizens (through public opinion polls) as an improvement in the electoral process. In the area of election management, perception is reality. Public confidence in election commissions hinges on the production of a credible and legitimate electoral process. The broader the engagement of the election commission with political parties, NGOs, and the general public, the more legitimate the process will be viewed. Transforming voter registration into a rolling process can mitigate the need for a new (and expensive) voter registration effort for every election.
4. When election commissions are responsible for voter information and education campaigns, it is important to assist them in constructing useful messages and delivering them to citizens in a timely and efficacious manner.
5. Election management assistance should include an effort at making the election administration process as open and transparent as possible, with access to voter lists and monitoring of the process by political parties, NGOs, and the general public.
6. On-site advisory teams, serving the election commission on a long-term basis, have proven to be successful means of securing credible and effective election administration.
7. The ultimate goal of election management assistance is the presence of a sustainable, permanent, autonomous, and independent election commission that operates in an open and transparent manner.
8. Long-term planning efforts should include the professionalization of election officials at all levels of the electoral system.
9. Election commission officials should be encouraged to participate in the regional election official organizations to share experiences.
10. Building local capacity to manage elections is a long-term process.
11. A comprehensive approach to election commission assistance should incorporate a broad assessment of election preparedness in order to set priorities for the short and long terms.

duplicate efforts. Ensuring that these commodities are kept track of and are available for future elections becomes a difficult, but key task of the DG officer, along with other donors, following elections. Specifically, this assistance has included the following:

- Applying modern technologies to the voter and candidate registration and vote

tabulation processes

- Assisting with budgeting, operational planning, and administration
- Promoting professional and uniform administration of elections through voter registrar and pollworker training programs

While activities such as pollworker training can have a developmental aspect, they are often introduced as part of a short-term package of assistance, since they are essential to carrying out elections.

*b. Long-term assistance*

Long-term assistance in support of election management functions seeks to build the capabilities by

- Providing consulting services in the areas of strategic planning and organizational management
- Supporting the introduction of new financial controls and accounting and personnel systems
- Undertaking a massive overhaul of the voter registration system, including commodities assistance, technological applications and support, and training
- Conducting specialized training for departments within the election commission or its secretariat, such as information technology and public information
- Advising on the design, implementation, and evaluation of training programs for professional staff and part-time election workers

Beyond building the election commission's capabilities, such activities tend to reinforce an institutional memory, instill professional ethics, and reduce dependencies both on other government or political institutions and on outside assistance.

**3. Voter Information/Education**

Voter information/education programs may be carried out by a number of institutions, including

the election commission, political parties, and NGOs. These institutions will use a variety of methods and media, depending upon the contextual factors discussed earlier in this manual.

Election commissions are likely to have some responsibility for providing voters with information on their voting rights and the election. This information tends to deal with the mechanics of registration and voting and must be free of any bias. It is often referred to as official voter education. Political parties also engage in voter education efforts. Their information tends to focus heavily upon "get out the vote (GOTV)" activities. Messages on the process of voting are usually intertwined with partisan information on how to identify and mark the party or its candidates on the ballot. The aim is to ensure that the party faithful show up at the polls on election day and mark their ballots correctly to influence undecided voters. NGOs may also serve as conduits for voter education aimed at the general electorate or targeted communities (especially with respect to special issues of importance to NGOs). They may assist election commissions in the provision of basic services or carry out their activities independently.

Decisions about which communication media are used, and to what extent, will depend upon the context in which the election campaign is being conducted, upon the characteristics and capabilities of the available mass media outlets, and upon the specific characteristics of a country (i.e., how most people in that country receive/respond to information). For example, are media outlets state-owned, private, or mixed? What are their capabilities, reach, and influence? In some cases, indirect methods of voter information/education will be used. These involve one-way communication by means of electronic and print media. Examples include special programming or public service announcements on radio and television; articles, advertisements, or special

**Assistance Approaches At a Glance  
Table 2: Election Management**

ELECTION MANAGEMENT	SHORT-TERM ASSISTANCE	LONG-TERM ASSISTANCE
1. Operational Planning Activities	This type of assistance typically covers a range of activities that may include election calendar development, a needs assessment, resource identification and mobilization, and budgeting. These activities may be carried out through a limited visit by expatriate personnel in advance of the election campaign and possibly coinciding with the establishment of a new election commission, calling of elections, or a donor coordination meeting.	Activities as part of assistance tend to focus primarily upon improved strategic planning by election commissions (see Training).
2. Commodities Assistance	In the case of post-conflict or breakthrough situations, elections may not be possible without commodities assistance, such as capital equipment, supplies, and services. As part of this effort, expatriate personnel may start with a needs assessment. They may also become responsible for procurement, shipping, inventory, storage, delivery, oversight, and final disposition (this requires a constant presence throughout the election process). The application of modern technologies to the voter registration and election processes may also necessitate commodities assistance (see below).	Commodities assistance may provide for the vertical and horizontal integration of the election management structure or may be in response to the application of modern technologies to the voter registration and election management processes (see below). Ensuring that commodities are not lost from one election to another is important for keeping costs down.
3. Application of Modern Technologies	In the case of post-conflict or breakthrough elections, there may be little or no time to apply modern technologies. In special circumstances, where there is no infrastructure for holding elections and where there is considerable lead time and a massive donor effort, an infusion of technology may be possible. Assistance may be provided in the form of technical expertise, training, and commodities. Technical advisors may need to be on site well in advance (e.g., opening of voter registration) and remain throughout the course of the election.	Application of modern technologies may go far to improve the efficiency, transparency and integrity of elections and the cohesiveness of the election management structure. Technologies might be applied to voter registration, signature verification, balloting, counting and tabulation, and security controls or may involve the creation of a computer network. Assistance may be provided in the form of technical expertise, training, and commodities. Technical advice may be carried out through routine field visits or on-site presence. Care must be taken so as not to introduce expensive and therefore unsustainable technology, especially in LDCs.
4. Financial Support	In some resource scarce environments, USAID through its partners has covered payroll costs for pollworkers/professional staff of election commissions.	
5. Administrative and Logistical Support	Expatriate <i>performance personnel</i> may serve as "adjunct" staff members to the election commission for accrediting election observers, procuring equipment, distributing election materials, developing logistics plans, or data-processing.	
6. Technical Advice	Expatriate <i>technical advisors</i> are often used to assist election commissioners and election commission staff in a range of areas, such as regulatory drafting, voter registration, information technology, campaign finance, election management, adjudication of grievances, statistics, computer programming, cartography, media relations, voter education, training.	Again, expatriate <i>technical advisors</i> are often used to assist election commissioners and election commission staff in the legal, management, and technical aspects of elections. The creation of a permanent commission, the re-organization of an existing commission, or the introduction of legal and procedural reforms are likely to create a need for expert advisors.
7. Training	Assistance is likely to focus on the training of registrars, pollworkers, or select personnel such as data-processors (in the event of the introduction of new technologies). If time permits, a training-of-trainers (cascading) program may be put into place. If not, direct training by expatriate personnel may be necessary.	Training as part of long-term assistance is likely to deal with the design, implementation, and evaluation of "in-house" training programs or the instruction of select personnel (particularly if new departments are created) in areas such as public relations, human resources management, or information technology. Training activities require specific timeframes and may be conducted as a stand-alone activity or as part of an on-going elections assistance project. Ongoing professional development may also be provided through participation in regional professional associations for election managers.
8. Strategic Planning/Organizational Management		This type of assistance usually involves an organizational management assessment, followed by strategic planning activities. These may require structural or staff reorganization, application of modern technologies, new management systems, changes in operating procedures, and professional development or training. Unlike operational planning, strategic planning and management looks beyond a specific election to address institutional capabilities and performance over time. Emphasis of assistance is on improved professionalism of a permanent election commission. Activities can be carried out by on-site advisors or periodic visits to the field.

**PROGRAM EXAMPLE**  
**Box THREE: VOTER EDUCATION**

In Slovakia, a successful voter education campaign demonstrates the results that can be achieved when partnerships are formed between the public and private sectors. The Slovak Foundation for a Civil Society was able to raise \$130,000 and in-kind contributions valued at \$2 million. IRI provided polling data to the organization which identified young people as a constituency for change. This data was at odds with conventional wisdom in Slovakia. This was central to the development of a specially tailored voter education campaign directed at young and first-time voters. The campaign, *Rock Voleib*, was modeled on the American *Rock the Vote*. It used rock stars and athletes, public service announcements, special events, and a cutting edge website. Its public service announcements were aired on national radio, television, and in theaters. On election day, they were broadcast on MTV Europe. Voter turnout for the election was 85 percent. Some 240,000 first-time voters participated, two-thirds of whom cast ballots in favor of the democratic opposition.

**FEASIBILITY QUESTIONS**  
**Box THREE: VOTER EDUCATION**

What institutions are responsible for and/or engaged in voter information/education activities?

What is the nature of these institutions, i.e., partisan, official? What are their capabilities?

What are the interest and awareness levels of the electorate? Have significant legal or procedural innovations been adopted for this election?

Are there certain segments of the population with special needs?

What are the options with respect to mass communication? What is their nature, i.e., state-owned, independent?

What are their capabilities, reach, and influence? Does this vary by region?

How do people in the country get their news and information?

inserts in newspapers and other periodicals; and any medium that can be printed with an election message such as posters, leaflets, banners, stickers, buttons, t-shirts, or shopping bags.

In other cases, direct methods are deemed more appropriate. Direct methods exhibit a more interactive relationship with the target audience. They typically involve some sort of special event to convey an election message. Rock concerts, festivals, sports competitions, plays produced by community theaters or travelling troupes, town hall meetings, games, and mock elections have all been used for such purposes.

Developing effective messages appropriate to the target population is best done through consultation with and involvement of foreign nationals of the country.

*a. Short-term assistance*

The responsibility for implementing voter

information/education programs may fall heavily upon international implementing organizations. They are likely to take a leading role in designing the campaign; overseeing production aspects; and assuming production, distribution, and in some cases broadcasting, costs. Short-term assistance has employed direct and indirect methods of voter information/education or some combination thereof:

- Preparing a voter information/education program on behalf of the election commission
- Providing funding to and guiding the creation, production, or distribution efforts of responsible institutions
- Sub-contracting local service providers to carry out voter information/education activities, including the design of messages



**LESSONS LEARNED**  
**NATIONAL ELECTIONS ASSISTANCE:**  
**VOTER EDUCATION**

1. In addition to working with election commissions on voter information and education, strategic partnerships should be developed with NGOs that are capable of carrying out voter education campaigns in a non-partisan fashion.
2. Public opinion polling and focus groups provide insights regarding citizen competence, interest in the electoral process, and the best means for communicating information. This information is valuable for planning of voter education programs.
3. Targeted voter information/education campaigns have proven to be effective at energizing distinct constituencies that have previously not participated in elections (e.g., women, youth, ethnic minorities).
4. Comprehensive approaches to voter education that include direct appeals from election commissions as well as indirect appeals through NGOs, using a variety of media outlets, have proven to be most effective.
5. Strategic partnerships with the business community, while not widely adopted, have proven to be successful in the alternative funding of voter education media campaigns.
6. Working with the government and private media can secure free airtime for voter information/education campaigns. The purchase of media time/space should be a last resort.
7. Media with broad distribution and varied audience should be targeted.
8. Officers should pay attention to the messages being delivered to citizens. Too much information/education in a short-time frame may be overwhelming. Focus on two or three key points and deliver these messages repeatedly.
9. Approaches/messages of the NGO partners delivering voter education campaigns may not be consistent with the campaign plan developed. On the other hand, the most effective campaigns are usually developed by local partners and staff. Cultural and language context is extremely important in developing an effective media campaign.
10. Long-term voter education programs should merge with civic education programming and be incorporated into civic education curriculum development efforts.
11. Political parties can often serve as the most effective conduits of voter education messages. Do not forget political parties when developing voter education campaigns.

Typically, these voter information/education activities are done on behalf of election commissions and with the assistance of local partners. Such partners might include NGOs, political parties, marketing agencies, and production companies.

*b. Long-term assistance*

As in the other categories, long-term assistance will focus on enhancing the capabilities of

election commissions, political parties, NGOs, and even academic institutions to carry out voter information/education programs. Such activities might include the following:

- Providing training in the design, implementation, and conduct of official or non-official voter information/education programs
- Offering grants to NGOs active in voter

information/education with the aim of institution building

- Facilitating the introduction of school-based civic education programs
- Fostering strategic partnerships between the public and private sectors with respect to the financing and implementation of voter information/education campaigns

Once the capabilities of local partners have been built or strengthened to the point that they can be relied upon to carry out comprehensive and quality voter information/education programs, USAID may begin to give direct grants for this purpose. It should also be noted that as voter education begins to move into the realm of civic education, additional funding support is available through other donor organizations. [See forthcoming USAID publication on civic education.]

#### ***4. Election Observation and Complaint Resolution***

Election observation is a method by which the efficiency, transparency, professionalism, and integrity of campaigns and elections are judged. In transitional societies, this task may be carried out by international election observation missions, the mass media, domestic monitoring groups, and/or political parties. Election observation is particularly appropriate in certain contexts, such as the emergence of new states, in post-conflict settings, during transitions from authoritarian to democratic rule, and following internal strife.<sup>9</sup> International observation may be most necessary in these contexts, with political

parties and domestic monitoring efforts playing an ever increasing role as a country moves toward consolidation. In established democracies, the integrity of elections is usually safeguarded by the mass media, citizen watchdog groups, and a multi-party system, whereby political parties keep an eye on each other. In addition to traditional election observation, a number of variations are being used extensively by USAID and its institutional partners. These include media monitoring, parallel vote tabulations (PVTs), and monitoring of human rights abuses and violence during the election campaign. Ultimately, multiple entities and institutions have the responsibility for oversight of the electoral process. USAID programming in this area should strengthen the capabilities of these entities to perform this vital oversight function.

The existence of accessible and responsible complaint resolution mechanisms is also crucial to safeguard the integrity of the electoral system and the accountability of its participants. In most settings, election complaints may be brought before election commissions, judicial bodies, or both. Election commissions offer what is known as administrative remedy. Complainants may have to exhaust all administrative remedies before lodging their complaints with a court of law, which is in a position to offer judicial remedy. This will depend upon provisions within the legal framework for the resolution of election-related complaints. In consolidated democracies, the judicial branch is key to ensuring that voting and political rights are upheld. In many transitional environments, however, the judiciary may undermine the process or may even be marginalized. This is particularly true when the judiciary is not able to fairly and competently adjudicate election-related grievances. In this case, complainants tend to turn to international observer missions or media representatives rather than to domestic institutions such as the courts.

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<sup>9</sup> A. Tostensen, D. Faber, and K. de Jong, K, *Towards an Integrated Approach to Election Observation? Professionalizing European Long-term Election Observations Missions, Part I: A Syllabus for Election Observation Training*. Policy Management Report, No. 7 (Maastricht: European Centre for Development Policy Management, September 1997).

**Assistance Approaches At a Glance**  
**Table 3: Voter Education**

VOTER EDUCATION	SHORT-TERM ASSISTANCE	LONG-TERM ASSISTANCE
1. Preparing a Voter Education Program	If local institutions do not have the time, resources, or expertise to undertake voter education, USAID's institutional partners and on-site technical experts may do so. This involves the design of the voter education campaign, all production aspects, and even covering broadcasting costs (although free airtime is usually sought). Often, an institutional partner will prepare a voter education program "on behalf" of an election commission.	While the same approach for short-term assistance applies to the long term with respect to the preparation of a voter education program, having more time enables consultation with host-country nationals more in the design and preparation stages.
2. Advising the Development of Voter Education Programs	It is common for field personnel to advise election commissions, NGOs, and political parties on the design, implementation, and evaluation of voter education campaigns. They are often in a position to provide valuable information, whether polling data or comparative models, to local institutions. It is important to use local talent and counterparts to develop voter education materials which resonate with voters. Even with limited time, one should maximize local input.	While the same approach for short-term assistance applies to the long term with respect to seeking advice on voter education programs, having more time allows more in-depth consultation with host-country nationals and more time to undertake more extensive polling and survey research to better target voter education campaigns.
3. Providing Service Contracts/ Sub-Grants for Voter Education Activities	Institutional partners may sign a service contract or award a sub-grant to a local partner, for example an NGO, marketing agency, or production company to undertake a non-partisan voter education campaign.	At this phase, the institutional partner may use the sub-granting mechanism as a way of building the institutional capacity of a local partner in voter education. Proven NGOs may be perceived by USAID as a less costly and more effective mechanism for implementing voter education programs and, thus, be awarded direct grants.
4. Training in Voter Education Approaches and Techniques	See Appendix 3 on political party activities.	Training may be provided to responsible staff within the election commission on how to design, implement, and evaluate voter education programs both for the general electorate and target audiences. NGOs and political parties may also receive training on "get out the vote" and voter education activities.
5. Facilitating Strategic Partnerships	There may be some opportunity to create constructive working relationships between election commissions and local NGOs or between the public and private sectors. An election commission without the human resources to carry out a voter education program might be convinced to contract a local NGO (provided it has the necessary capabilities) to do the job. Foreign companies operating in the host country might also be approached to provide funding for non-partisan efforts.	Efforts can be undertaken to institutionalize strategic relationships between a host of public and private players including election commissions, NGOs, the Ministry of Education, secondary schools and institutions of higher learning, media outlets, private businesses, associations, industries, and clubs that can contribute in some way to voter education efforts.

*Notes: During the consolidation phase, voter education may give way to civic education, which may be funded by USAID or other agencies and foundations.*

a. *Short-term assistance*

In many contexts where short-term assistance is provided, international implementing organizations play a major role in monitoring the campaigns and elections process, including the adjudication of grievances process. Their activities may include the following:

- Fielding international observer missions
- Supporting the monitoring efforts, if they exist, of political parties and local NGOs
- Conducting/supporting media monitoring and PVT activities
- Tracking and publicizing election-related complaints and their resolutions
- Mediating disputes between election contestants
- Helping to facilitate peaceful transitions of power

**PROGRAM EXAMPLE**  
**Box Four: Election Observation**

The National Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL) in the Philippines is frequently held out as a model for the conduct of parallel vote tabulations. By the time snap presidential elections were called in 1986, NAMFREL had years of experience conducting traditional election observation and had built a strong grassroots network. It was considered a credible and unbiased organization. NAMFREL mobilized 500,000 volunteers to assist with the conduct of a quick count for the presidential elections. Its aim was to deter any tampering during the official tabulation process. Its volunteers obtained results from 75 percent of the polling sites. The results of the quick count showed Corazon Aquino leading; official results gave President Marcos the victory. A military revolt soon followed, reinforced by public and international pressure. Within three weeks of the election, Marcos was forced to relinquish power and the duly elected leader was installed.

**FEASIBILITY QUESTIONS**  
**Box Four: Election Observation**  
**AND COMPLAINT RESOLUTION**

What institutions have the right to have election observers in the polls? What are the legal restrictions?

Is the electoral environment conducive to domestic monitoring efforts, or will an international observation mission be required?

Will a spectrum of political parties be able to mount a comprehensive observer effort?

What about NGOs? What are their capabilities? Are they truly independent?

Is the judiciary independent, or is it subject to manipulation?

Is the judiciary capable? Does the bench have training and experience specific to campaigns and elections?

How knowledgeable are political participants about their rights to file complaints and the legal and administrative requirements for doing so?

While local monitoring, PVT, and media monitoring operations may exist, they may be quite dependent upon foreign financing, training, and support, for example, to secure observer credentials or obtain press coverage.

b. *Long-term assistance*

Long-term assistance in the area of election observation and complaint resolution will be directed toward creating or strengthening local institutions and building their capacities. More specific programming information on media components to this long-term assistance can be found in USAID's *The Role of Media in Democracy: A Strategic Approach* [ordering information available inside back cover]. For example:

- Training political parties and NGOs to conduct domestic monitoring of campaigns and elections

## ASSISTANCE APPROACHES AT A GLANCE

**Table 4: Election Observation and Adjudication of Complaints**

ELECTION OBSERVATION & COMPLAINT RESOLUTION	SHORT-TERM ASSISTANCE	LONG-TERM ASSISTANCE
1. Fielding an International Election Observation Mission	International observer missions may be required in post-conflict and breakthrough situations where domestic monitoring efforts do not exist or are severely undermined. International observers can focus international attention on a given election, demonstrate support for the democratic process, raise public confidence, deter or expose fraud or irregularities, mediate disputes, contain conflict, legitimize the outcome, and facilitate a peaceful transition to power. These types of missions have also been used to exploit political openings. The effort may employ a combination of long-term and short-term observers to ensure adequate coverage (both geographically and over time).	The need for international observer missions should decrease as countries move to consolidating elections.
2. Supporting a Domestic Monitoring Effort	If an indigenous monitoring effort exists, USAID and its institutional partners can provide support in a number of ways. They may develop pollwatcher training programs for NGOs and political parties. Training may be undertaken directly or through TOT. Expatriate personnel may also advise NGOs and political parties on their respective monitoring efforts. In the case of NGOs, commodities and/or financial support may also be provided. International observer groups and/or technical assistance providers may serve to boost the morale and status of domestic monitoring groups.	At this stage, assistance, whether in the form of training, commodities, or a sub-grant, seeks to build the technical and management capabilities of the domestic monitoring efforts. This assistance may serve to consolidate an informal monitoring effort or expand the skill set of an NGO to include media monitoring or PVT. Proven NGOs may ultimately receive direct grants from USAID in support of their domestic monitoring efforts. (see subsequent boxes).
3. Conducting Media Monitoring	There are a number of options for media monitoring. USAID might contract a foreign or local organization to undertake this effort directly. Or, one of its institutional partners could sub-contract such an organization. Another approach would be to provide training to a local organization to carry out media monitoring. Commodities, such as televisions, VCRs, and computers might also be provided to the local partner.	Institutionalizing assistance whether in the form of training, commodities, or a sub-grant, will seek to build the technical and management capabilities of local institutions carrying out media monitoring or a PVT. Proven NGOs may ultimately receive direct grants from USAID in support of this activity.
4. Providing for a Parallel Vote Tabulation	Virtually the same options exist with respect to PVTs. USAID might contract a foreign or local organization to undertake this effort directly. Or, one of its institutional partners might sub-contract such an organization. Another approach would be to provide training to equip a local organization to carry out a PVT. Commodities such as computers may also be provided to the local partner.	Training, commodities, or a sub-grant may be given with the intent of building the technical and management capabilities of the PVT organization. Proven NGOs may ultimately receive direct grants from USAID in support of a PVT.
5. Tracking and Publicizing Election-related Cases	Given the inadequate development of judicial institutions and the short timetables indicative of most post-conflict and breakthrough elections, there may be little opportunity to adequately prepare election officials and judges. Often, election observation groups or technical assistance providers will track and publicize the handling of election-related cases in an attempt to create pressure on election commissions and the courts to equitably and consistently deal with complaints.	
6. Training Efforts Directed at Judges, Political Parties, NGOs, and Journalists	In the case of short-term assistance, it may be possible (and advisable) to instruct political participants on how to adequately document, file, and defend sound election-related cases with election commissions or the courts.	Institutionalizing assistance provides a more feasible opportunity to train judges in the intricacies of election law and handling of process and results-oriented disputes. At this stage, training may also be provided to journalists to hone their investigative skills and instill a "public watch dog" mentality for campaigns and elections. Further efforts aimed at improving the capacity of NGOs and political parties to document, file, and defend sound cases may also be necessary.
7. Establishing Special Courts		Some countries have opted to create special courts for adjudicating election-related disputes. If such an institution is created, there may be considerable need for expert advice, training, and commodities assistance.

**LESSONS LEARNED**  
**NATIONAL ELECTIONS ASSISTANCE:**  
**ELECTION OBSERVATION AND COMPLAINT RESOLUTION**

1. Election observation should be viewed as a multi-layered, long-term process. Political parties, domestic NGOs, international observers, and the media are all relevant actors in a comprehensive election monitoring effort.
2. Complete coverage of the entire electoral process (pre-election campaign, campaign, election, counting and tabulation, and post-election complaint resolution) is always preferable to short-term “fly-in’s” by international monitoring teams.
3. When developing domestic monitoring capacity, be sure to stress the need for comprehensive and systematic collection and analysis of election data and evidence of misconduct, fraud, or abuse. Fielding 10,000 domestic monitors in a country is only valuable if the findings of each of these observers is reported and incorporated into a more systematic assessment of the electoral process. While individual stories are important to make clear cases, anecdotes should not be the final product of a USAID-supported monitoring effort.
4. Observation efforts should include monitoring of access to the electoral process by all political actors.
5. Parallel vote tabulation (PVT) efforts have proven to be effective means of checking the electoral process.
6. In developed democracies, political parties provide election observation and monitoring efforts. In newly democratizing countries, indigenous election monitoring organizations are often supported by USAID, in addition to the development of party pollwatchers. Assistance to election monitoring NGOs should focus on the systematic collection of election data, including results at the various levels as well as systematic evidence of fraud or abuse. Attention should also be paid to the sustainability of election watchdog organizations. Full funding of such entities, election after election, is not sustainable.
7. While redundancy is often a good thing when dealing with election monitoring, the presence of multiple USAID-supported monitoring teams has not demonstrated the additional value added to the observation process. Joint teams managed by one entity or single delegations are preferable to multiple U.S. delegations traveling to conduct monitoring efforts.
8. Complaint resolution contains an element in common with an area discussed earlier in the manual—legal framework. Planning should take into account the existing legal framework for resolution and adjudication. Attention should be paid to this aspect of the legal framework when programming activities in the legal framework area.
9. At the end of the electoral process, it must be remembered that complaint resolution is the province of an indigenous governmental entity, framed by rule of law. It is important to allow the internal mechanisms of justice to operate, rather than intervening on behalf of aggrieved parties or candidates.

- Specialized training in PVTs and media monitoring
- Instructing participants in the electoral process on how to better document, lodge, and argue process and results-oriented complaints
- Training those responsible for adjudicating grievances and issuing administrative and judicial remedies in the specifics of campaigns and elections law
- Training journalists to fulfill their public

information and watchdog functions during campaigns and elections, particularly with respect to investigative journalism

- Resolving jurisdictional problems through amendments to the law and institutional re-organization, including the introduction of specialized courts

## **B. Approaches to Local Election Assistance**

One of the primary motivations in providing local election assistance is to reinforce democratic decentralization by increasing the accountability of local officials. This type of assistance typically follows the introduction of a devolution of power scheme. Within the context of this manual, the phrase “local election assistance” is used in reference to aid given in support of any sub-national election, executive or legislative, from state to ward and everything in between. The local election process can be considerably more complicated than the national one, thereby presenting unique challenges for assistance providers. Depending upon the timing and complexity of the elections, a variety of jurisdictional questions, and the degree of decentralization of the election management process, DG field officers may be required to decide whether a nationwide assistance program is feasible or whether targeted assistance in select districts would be beneficial.

### **1. Legal Framework**

Assistance in support of local elections often occurs in conjunction with a country’s move to devolve government power. It is highly likely, then, that new institutions have been created at the local level or that existing institutions will be directly elected for the first time. As a result, there may be no legal framework for the conduct of local elections. There may be opportunities for international implementing organizations to facilitate an open debate on the adoption of a

#### **PROGRAM EXAMPLE BOX FIVE: LEGAL FRAMEWORK**

In Russia, USAID was confronted with local elections in 89 constituent republics, covering a vast territory and occurring on a rolling basis. Legislation was drafted and voting systems selected locally. Many local legislatures had served as “rubber-stamp” bodies in the past and had little experience in legislative drafting. In response, IFES assembled a team of Russian and U.S. lawyers to prepare a set of model local election laws. Each used a different voting system and demonstrated how this choice affected other aspects of the election process. Each was fully compliant with Russia’s Voting Rights Act and addressed the concerns of election observers. These models were provided to local election managers and legislators throughout the country to facilitate their decision-making and legal drafting processes.

devolution scheme or local election law, to furnish comparative models, and to provide analytical and legal drafting services in support of this process.

If support of the legal framework for local elections is a possibility, the DG field officer may want to explore a number of issues:

- Where does the government stand on the issue of devolution? Has a municipal government law been enacted? Have local bodies been directly elected in the past, or is this the first time?
- Does legislation on local elections exist? Is legislation being prepared within each jurisdiction or at the national level? Are various voting systems being used? Is there fundamental legislation on voting rights and elections with which local election laws must comply?
- Which bodies have the right of legislative initiative with respect to election law? Do these bodies have any

experience in legislative drafting? What is the timetable for preparing or amending such legislation?

## 2. *Election Commissions*

The introduction of direct elections or other reforms at the local level may necessitate substantive changes to the election management structure. New election commissions may need significant assistance in such areas as budgeting, strategic and operational planning, commodities procurement, provision of basic services, and pollworker training. Existing election commissions may be just as likely to require help with respect to re-organization and -training as a result of reforms. They may also benefit from assistance in the implementation of new legal provisions and procedural innovations or the application of modern technologies.

Before deciding to proceed with assistance in the area of election management, DG field officers may want to consider the following questions:

- What institutions are responsible for local elections? Is responsibility decentralized?

**PROGRAM EXAMPLE**  
**BOX SIX: ELECTION MANAGEMENT**

USAID faced a number of challenges in West Bank/Gaza. The local election law was vague. There was an obvious incompatibility between legal requirements and administrative realities. Jurisdictional problems were anticipated between existing institutions and the yet-to-be-formed Supreme Committee for Local Elections. Prior to the calling of elections, IFES was brought in to initiate a strategic planning exercise. It conducted an audit of the local election law, assessed election system performance during the 1996 legislative and executive elections, and conducted interviews with a range of stakeholders. A comprehensive guide was then prepared for those who would be appointed to the new election commission. Its aim was to enhance the new institution's strategic planning and management capabilities.

Will existing election commissions be used (modified) or new ones created? What is the role, i.e., consultative or supervisory, of the national election commission, if any? What are the capabilities of the commissions? Do they have previous experience with local elections? Is there any institutional memory? How dependent are these commissions on local administrations?

- What is the condition of local voter lists? How and by whom are they maintained?

## 3. *Voter Education*

Voter education campaigns in support of local elections are likely to take on additional

**PROGRAM EXAMPLE**  
**BOX SEVEN: VOTER EDUCATION**

In Honduras, USAID was able to work directly with a local partner to address the challenges of devolution. Although legislation on municipal reform was adopted in 1990, the direct election of local councilors was not provided for under existing legislation on local elections. A local and proven NGO, AMHON, proposed that the law be amended to allow for separate ballots for local elections. Over an extended period, it combined public advocacy and voter education efforts to place pressure on political elites. The proposal was eventually adopted, resulting in direct election of local councilors. Once elections were called, AMHON carried out a voter information campaign on balloting under the new system.

In South Africa, one of the key problems in the administration of local elections was voter registration. A public opinion survey undertaken for NDI found that a significant portion of the population had not registered to vote and did not have information about how to register. On the basis of the survey's findings, NDI was able to convince the election commission to extend the deadline for registration and expand voter education efforts. The data was used to design the most compelling arguments to sway people to register and vote. NDI further assisted the election commission to produce posters and registration handbooks.



**LESSONS LEARNED  
LOCAL ELECTIONS ASSISTANCE**

1. As elections assistance programming moves from the capital to cities and towns throughout the country, logistical constraints are more likely to influence programming decisions. It is important to plan strategically by evaluating the prospects for successful program activities that are viable and sustainable. Another consideration should be whether or not programs are replicable throughout the country.
2. Targeting assistance is vital in local elections assistance. Donor coordination is particularly important at the local level. Decentralization programming has risen on the agenda of numerous bilateral and multilateral donor organizations, including USAID.
3. Training of trainers is crucial in local elections assistance. It is cost-prohibitive to train election officials, election monitors, or political parties in one city or town at a time. The only way to reach significant portions of a country is through cascade training that multiplies experience.
4. Voter education materials have proven to be more useful in the hands of local election officials and monitors than at the national level. At the same time, production of local materials is more costly—both in terms of mass production and dissemination. This factor should be taken into account when planning local elections assistance programs.
5. Perhaps even more so than at the national level, it is important to engage local leaders, political parties, and NGOs in elections assistance. Creating “ownership” of such assistance bolsters the credibility of election administration and empowers local leaders and citizens.
6. Voter education should incorporate input from local opinion leaders in lieu of systematic evidence (public opinion polling) on citizen perceptions of the electoral process.
7. Even fledgling political parties at the local level need to be cultivated.

dimensions relative to national elections. This is because voters will need to be informed about local government reforms, about the roles and responsibilities of new local government bodies, and about the importance of local elections to the vitality of their community. Confidence-building measures may need to be a part of this process. In some contexts, voter education activities have been used to inform the public about and to build pressure on the national government for the devolution of power.

With respect to programming activities in the area of voter education, the DG field officer will need to know the answers to certain questions:

- Are there institutions capable of carrying out voter information, e.g., election commissions, political parties, or NGOs

within each jurisdiction?

- Can a nationwide voter information effort be carried out, or are different voting systems and laws being used in each jurisdiction?
- How familiar are voters with the role and responsibilities of local decision-making bodies? What is the interest and awareness level in the local elections process?
- Are there sub-groups within each jurisdiction that have special needs?
- What communication outlets exist within each jurisdiction? What are their capabilities, reach, and influence?

**PROGRAM EXAMPLE**  
**BOX EIGHT: ELECTION OBSERVATION**

China provides an interesting example of local elections which represent a major political opening. Since 1994, IRI has taken advantage of this and sent international observer missions to monitor 50 local elections in 10 provinces. It has offered extensive recommendations on legal and procedural reforms, many of which have been adopted. In Fujian Province, for example, 29 of 40 recommendations were adopted over a period of three years.

In January 1999, the Carter Center observed direct elections for township people's congress representatives and indirect elections for township government officials in Chongqing municipality. The mission was the first-ever international observation of elections for government officials in China.

Although China remains a one-party state, two-fifths of those elected to village committees are non-communists. These institutions are beginning to wrest real power away from local Communist Party structures. This engagement of the local elections process may set an important precedent for national breakthrough elections.

#### ***4. Election Observation and Complaint Resolution***

The engagement of international observers in local elections is not unheard of, particularly if they are held simultaneously with national elections or represent a major political opening, i.e., when devolution precedes political and electoral reforms at the national level. Otherwise, assistance might be given to political parties or NGOs to facilitate domestic monitoring efforts. The adjudication of grievances presents its own challenges as judicial institutions at the local level may not be adequately developed to accommodate process and results-oriented electoral disputes. At a minimum, political parties and NGOs may receive training on how best to track and document violations of election law and file complaints under existing mechanisms.

In assessing the feasibility of election observation or complaint adjudication activities, the DG field officer will need to determine

- Are there institutions, i.e., political parties or NGOs capable of carrying out election observation in each of the local jurisdictions? Do these institutions have the legal right to observe elections?
- Do judicial institutions exist within each jurisdiction to handle election-related disputes? How developed are these local judicial institutions? Are they independent? Do they have the experience and knowledge necessary to adjudicate such cases?
- Are there other options for filing complaints, i.e., with election commissions or national courts? What are their capabilities?

In each of the preceding areas, DG officers must be cognizant of the logistical difficulties of implementing local elections assistance in a comprehensive manner. It is more likely the case that budgetary constraints may not allow for total coverage of all localities. Programming decisions should, therefore, factor in the most effective allocations of resources.

#### **C. Approaches to Post-elections Assistance**

*Post-elections assistance* can be defined as programming that occurs between elections and the seating of the new legislature or government. It is aimed at facilitating a smooth political transition and preparing recently elected officials to fulfill their roles and responsibilities under a new political system. As with the other types of elections assistance discussed in this manual, it is important that post-elections assistance be incorporated into a longer-term DG strategy to be maximally effective.

The post-elections assistance category includes a wide variety of activities that must begin

immediately after elections, such as

- Establishing and strengthening the legal infrastructure of the new political system
- Familiarizing all political actors with the new political system
- Building public confidence in the new political system
- Dealing constructively with potential threats to the new system
- Helping political parties to function within the legislature, including managing public policy

Such activities address substantive issues that might well be integrated into longer-term electoral and political process or governance programs. Before the introduction of distinct post-election programming, the only option to pursue such assistance was to tack it onto elections programming through some sort of modification or await a new round of funding requests. The length of time required to secure approvals, however, might well exceed the transition period. In short, distinct post-elections programs should be designed to fill a void, thereby ensuring the continuity of assistance during the sensitive period after elections. The result of such an approach has been to uphold the momentum for reform, demonstrate a sustained U.S. commitment, provide an opportunity for relationship-building with new political actors, and positively influence the stability of the new political system.

As with other forms of assistance, there is a potential multiplier effect to be gained from well-designed programs aimed at one of these needs. Strengthening of the legal infrastructure of the new political system may, for example, contribute to greater accountability and transparency. Increasing political actors'

understanding of the new political system may help to reduce the threat of intervention by remnants of the old regime. Measures taken to address any one of these issues is likely to generate greater public confidence in the transition.

A variety of approaches to post-elections assistance and their intended effect are discussed in greater detail below:

### *1. Legal Framework*

In transitional settings, elections do not simply determine who will hold which public offices. They bring into being a new set of governing institutions, whose respective roles may not yet be well-defined. Establishing a constitutional and legal framework that defines the rules of governance is a crucial task during the post-election period.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>FEASIBILITY QUESTIONS</b> <b>Box NINE: POST-ELECTIONS ASSISTANCE</b></p> <p>Are new or significantly modified governing institutions being introduced?</p> <p>Is there time to carry out post-elections assistance before the new government is installed?</p> <p>What is the level of experience of newly elected officials? What priority issues will they face immediately upon assuming office?</p> <p>What is required in terms of a constitutional and legal framework to consolidate the new political system?</p> <p>Are there indications that a peaceful transition of power is in danger? Who poses that threat?</p> <p>Were the military and internal or special security forces an integral part of the previous regime or political system? How are they to be demobilized?</p> <p>Does the public understand the roles and responsibilities of the new governing institution(s) as well as their own as citizens? Do they and the losing parties have confidence in these institutions?</p>
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**LESSONS LEARNED**  
**POST-ELECTIONS ASSISTANCE**

1. While post-elections assistance is, by definition above, short-term, it is important to plan for the possibility of political openings occurring following an election.
2. Initial preparation of newly elected officials is crucial to a smooth transition within government.
3. In the case of the creation of new political systems, planning should be targeted at the establishment or strengthening of the legal framework of the political system.
4. Programming should be targeted at familiarizing all players with the new political system, providing technical assistance for new or transitional political institutions.
5. Design of programs should minimize threats from the old regime. This issue is particularly acute when dealing with civil-military relations following a period of military rule.
6. It is important to sustain and build upon human and organizational resources created or supported during the electoral period.
7. Programming should be designed to foster the credible transfer of political power in a transparent and accountable manner.

**2. Threat Minimization**

This type of assistance can take many forms. For example, it might include efforts aimed at helping military forces demobilize and return to their barracks. It could assist in the reform of political and security forces to minimize paramilitary activity and direct intimidation by the old guard. Or it might explore possibilities for creating mechanisms for dealing with human rights abuses by the old regime such as truth and reconciliation commissions, amnesty laws, or special tribunals.

**3. Orientation of Political Actors**

Even where a constitutional framework does exist, it is possible that political institutions are being put into place for the first time. This may be the case for breakthrough elections and first local elections held as part of the devolution of a power scheme. As a result, the primary goal of such assistance is to provide political actors with a clear understanding of the new institutions and rules of the game. [See Nigeria example in box this page.]

**PROGRAM EXAMPLE**  
**Box NINE: POST-ELECTIONS ASSISTANCE**

Due to existing sanctions, USAID was prohibited from providing any pre- or post-elections assistance to the government of Nigeria. However, USAID was able to train newly elected officials in the period between elections and transfer of power prior to their official swearing-in ceremonies. Utilizing its rapid response unit, USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives, the Center, and institutional partners on the ground, USAID initiated post-elections assistance within days of the election. Johns Hopkins University already had a grassroots network in place and was selected to carry out training for elected officials at the local level. NDI, which helped create the Transitional Monitoring Group, a network of 45 NGOs during the election campaign, shifted quickly into training activities for governors-elect. Management Systems International, under contract to the Center, organized training for those elected to both houses of the parliament. State legislators-elect were also invited to participate in this training. These activities were carried out during a four-month period. Once the newly elected assumed office, assistance programming shifted from post-elections to a more comprehensive DG strategic approach.

#### 4. *Public Confidence*

Voter apathy toward elections stems from a sense that the results matter little to people's daily lives. It can also result from the way in which public affairs are conducted. Politicians often feel that, with the passing of elections and the absence of international attention, there is less reason to act in good faith under the new political system. Many of the other program activities already described will help increase public confidence in the transition. There are also ways to address the issue directly. Public opinion surveys on attitudes toward and an understanding of the transition process could identify areas of weak public confidence, the results of which might then be used to develop strategies and messages for addressing them. For example, town meetings might be called between newly elected and incumbent officials so that citizens could air their concerns about the transition process. The development of concrete linkages between electoral representatives and their constituents should be the focus of attention in building public confidence and in addressing issues of inclusion and responsiveness.

#### **D. Approaches to Political Party Development Assistance**

Political parties are commonly taken for granted as the essential building blocks of a democratic political system, without which democracy cannot function. Yet in most countries undergoing transitions to democracy, parties are the weakest part of the new political system. In most cases, opposition parties have been banned for all or much of the country's recent history, and thus have little or no experience with loyal opposition. As a consequence, one finds low levels of organizational capacity coupled with a poor understanding of the role and structure of such opposition.

Elections have been the starting point rather than the culmination of the democratization process throughout much of the developing world. Instead of growing up organically as representatives of particular social groups, parties tend to spring up in response to calls for elections. Elections may be announced with very little lead-time for coherent parties to form. Would-be political leaders are suddenly presented with the need to create a vehicle with which to compete for political power, and to do so within a very short time period. As a result, opposition political parties in countries undergoing democratic transitions are often little more than a handful of leaders in search of a constituency. By contrast, longtime ruling parties must transform themselves from party-states, with all of the power and resources that implies, into competitive and more responsive political parties.

It is imperative that assistance programs aimed at strengthening democratic processes and institutions take account of the role and character of political parties. This section of the manual provides a framework designed to stimulate thinking about the most important functions of political parties and how external assistance can be used most effectively to enable parties to perform these functions well. For a more detailed discussion of political party development in transitional societies and related programming guidance including the constraints on direct funding of political parties through USAID programs, please see *USAID Political Party Development Assistance*. (See ordering information on inside back cover.)

It should be noted at the outset that assistance to political parties corresponds roughly to two very different U.S. government goals for supporting political and electoral processes. In some instances, the U.S. government's primary goal is to lend legitimacy to a given electoral process. Party assistance programs most appropriate for this objective are those that focus on creating a "level playing field" and enabling greater

**Assistance Approaches At a Glance  
Table 5: Political Party Development**

POLITICAL PARTY ACTIVITY	SHORT-TERM ASSISTANCE	LONG-TERM ASSISTANCE
1. Campaign Strategy	Assistance in advance of a breakthrough election is likely to be dominated by efforts to help political parties develop and execute a successful campaign strategy. Although these types of activities are intended to “level” the political playing field, depending on the range of parties receiving assistance and the proximity of elections, this assistance may be labeled “partisan” by certain local actors.	Typically, long-term assistance will still focus somewhat on helping political parties to refine their campaign techniques for use in both national and local elections.
2. Polling	Either the provision of polling data or instruction in basic polling techniques. Political party representatives are taught to apply this information to message development/campaign strategies.	Training in polling techniques. Political parties are taught how to use this information to become more competitive and more responsive to their core membership and to the public.
3. Message/Platform Development	Campaign managers and candidates are taught to boil down their party’s platform into messages and a slogan which voters can understand and with which they will identify.	Assistance focuses on facilitating message and platform development as a means of developing a distinct party image, creating a common vision, and strengthening links with the electorate.
4. Recruitment	Assistance in methods for recruiting campaign volunteers, pollwatchers/workers, and candidates.	Assistance in this area includes how to recruit volunteers, staff, candidates, leaders, and members. Training and incentive programs are also addressed.
5. Coalition Building	Political parties may be encouraged to reach out to like-minded political parties and special interest groups in the interests of forging a coalition and increasing their electoral prospects.	At this stage, coalition-building efforts may focus on building parliamentary coalitions (either formally or on an issue basis) as well as strategic alliances within the broader political context.
6. Get Out the Vote	Assistance provided to political parties in designing and implementing GOTV campaigns are designed to turn out the party faithful and sway undecided voters on election day.	Development of systems for transport, list development, voter information management, organization and recruitment of block-captains.
7. Communication	Instruction to candidates and party leaders in such skills as public speaking, debate, and image development, appearing on camera, holding a press conference, and interacting with voters.	Similar instruction is likely to be provided to party leaders and prospective candidates. More emphasis on developing communication plans, strategies, and media relations.
8. Campaign Financing	Advising on resource mobilization in the midst of a campaign may focus on identifying/maximizing existing resources, using in-kind contributions, understanding campaign finance laws.	Instruction in resource mobilization and fundraising techniques necessary to ensure the sustainability of the party organization and its competitiveness in elections across time.
9. Pollwatcher Training	If political parties have the right to observe balloting and counting of votes on election day, assistance may be needed to mobilize, coordinate, and train pollwatchers. In some cases, political parties may also have the right to appoint workers to polling boards, whose function will be different than that of the pollwatchers and will require specially-tailored training.	Efforts as part of long-term assistance will focus on building the capacity of political parties to development, administer, and evaluate in-house training programs for pollwatchers and pollworkers.
10. Complaint Mechanisms	Nascent political parties will need to learn their rights and responsibilities under laws governing campaigns and elections. Information on available complaint mechanisms and how to collect evidence, file a complaint with a sound legal basis, and present a case is often necessary.	
11. Leadership Training		Assistance aimed at building the ability of political parties to identify, recruit, and train party leaders and candidates at all levels (including target groups like women and youth).
12. Internal Democracy	Due to time constraints, activities as part of a short-term assistance effort may zero in on making the selection of candidates by political parties a more democratic process, i.e., one that is transparent and inclusive rather than being handled by party elites behind closed doors.	Assistance efforts in this area would focus on the development of by-laws, participatory decision-making, intra-party communication, devolution of power, and leader and candidate selection processes.
13. Party Building		Activities intended to broaden the organizational and geographic base of the party, e.g., through the creation of local chapters, and build the capabilities of local leaders.
14. Governance		Once political parties gain power, activities may shift to helping them participate more effectively in government through coalition-building, legislative drafting, parliamentary procedure, caucuses/committee formation, office operations, and constituency, media, and advocacy group relations.

*Note: These grids are provided for illustrative and comparative purposes. The types of assistance listed are not exhaustive nor are short- and long-term activities mutually exclusive.*

political competition between parties in contrast to longer-term institutionalizing goals such as building the organizational or governance capacity of political parties.

This does not mean, however, that the types of assistance described below are mutually exclusive. Rather, they are complementary and partially overlapping (see Appendix C). An electoral process that is to be viewed as legitimate requires a real choice between at least two parties, something that is impossible without at least one opposition party capable of surviving between elections and proposing a credible governing program.

*a. Short-term assistance*

Elections are critical to democracy, and parties are critical actors in elections. Parties competing in elections give voters a choice of representatives and policies. But parties that want to participate in elections must feel they can be competitive. And in order for them to accept the outcome, they must have confidence in the fairness of the electoral process. Programs focused on helping parties to compete effectively in elections are the most common type of party assistance programs. There are several reasons for this. First, and as noted above, since 1990 most democratic transitions have involved elections in some way. Second, the State Department and USAID have been more willing to fund election-related party work than other kinds of party assistance programming. Finally, parties typically are more interested in receiving campaign training assistance.

Short-term assistance to political parties in anticipation of election campaigns have traditionally included the following:

- Developing and implementing campaign and communication strategies

**FEASIBILITY QUESTIONS**  
**Box TEN: POLITICAL PARTY DEVELOPMENT**

Do the beginnings of a multi-party system exist? Did the emergence of a spectrum of political parties pre-date the calling of elections or stem from it?

What are the cultural and social attitudes toward political parties?

Are other entities, such as public associations or trade unions, for example, able to field candidates in elections?

How will traditional patron-client networks influence the prospects of individual parties?

What are the legal rights and responsibilities of political parties?

How level is the playing field?

What is the level of tension and distrust between the parties? Is a boycott of elections likely?

What are the resources and capabilities of the parties, and the national and local levels?

How cohesive are party structures?

Does the party represent more than a very narrow set of actors? Are these grassroots connections?

- Conducting public opinion polling and applying the results to campaign strategy and message development
- Developing and delivering campaign messages
- Recruiting volunteers
- Designing and implementing get out the vote (GOTV) campaigns
- Training and deploying party pollwatchers and/or pollworkers
- Documenting and seeking redress for electoral disputes and violations

Such assistance may have useful side effects for longer-term party development as well as for the survival of the democratic political system. Helping to ensure that elections are carried out in a manner acceptable to all parties is an essential first step in the development of political parties and in the consolidation of the political system. Successful participation in elections (whether the party wins or loses the elections) helps to focus a party's attention on key aspects of party building between elections—internal party communications, media relations, grassroots party organization, etc. However, it is important to point out that these are only potential side effects. Whether or not they become real depends on whether parties are able and willing to make use of them.

*b. Long-term assistance*

While the ability to field competitive candidates in elections is an essential function of political parties, it does not guarantee the development of broad-based, viable, or internally democratic parties. Party leaders may be more focused on winning elections than on building inclusive and sustainable parties. After elections, the organizational gains made during a campaign are often not maintained. Getting and keeping the attention of party leaders when they are in government is also a major challenge. In turn, party leaders may be wary of making changes in their party's formal or informal procedures and structures for fear it might weaken their authority.

There are several types of assistance activities useful to overcoming some of these challenges:

- Building local party chapters, broadening the organizational/geographic base
- Increasing and broadening party membership, especially select

**PROGRAM EXAMPLE**  
**Box ELEVEN: POLITICAL PARTY DEVELOPMENT**

Despite experience gained during several post-communist elections in Poland, campaign skills remained confined to a national political elite. In anticipation of the 1997 elections, NDI embarked upon a program to foster the campaign skills of local political party chapters. It conducted training activities and individual consultations for 70 local party chapters. The results of NDI's efforts became evident as the campaign unfolded and were characterized by a *Washington Post* report that indicated Polish political parties were doing what had never been done before. "They knocked on doors . . . went hoarse chatting up voters . . . and carried questionnaires from Krakow to Poznan . . . to ask Poles what they wanted from their public servants."

In Mongolia, victories at the ballot box failed to produce the consolidation of political parties. Most districts lack party offices. The politics of "personality" displaced the leading role of the party. Elected officials tended to "go it alone" rather than submit to party principles, positions, or discipline. In response, IRI assisted parties with professionalization, grassroots organizational development, coalition-building, and communications strategies. The chairman of parliament expressed a commitment to creating viable and effective party structures at the district level. National party leaders drafted three-year strategic plans. Each district party leader developed a communications strategy. In 10 districts, voter outreach plans were also devised. Two major parties supported a coalition candidate for the 1993 presidential election and were able to sustain the coalition for the 1996 parliamentary elections, pursuing joint candidate slates, a unified platform, and compatible campaign messages.

- constituencies, such as women and youth
- Pursuing leadership development initiatives at the national and local levels
- Using polling, surveys, and focus groups to make parties more competitive/



**LESSONS LEARNED**  
**POLITICAL PARTY DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE**

1. USAID support for political parties should not include direct financial support or indirect support through the delivery of commodities with demonstrable market value.
2. It is crucial to address the needs of political parties as determined by the parties themselves. Caveat: the first thing most parties will say they need is money. Do not oblige them on this issue.
3. Starting as early as possible with political party development assistance will help ensure that such programming is viewed as a long-term investment rather than as an election-specific activity.
4. Transparency in dealings with political parties is essential.
5. Inclusive programming ensures that all democratic parties are welcome.
6. Work at the regional and local levels with political parties will prevent focusing solely on political elites in the capital.
7. Trust between trainers and political party leaders is crucial. It may not be the case that U.S. trainers are the best. Recruitment of trainers from neighboring countries with similar party systems may be more effective.
8. “Interfering in the domestic affairs of sovereign states” should remain a yardstick by which all activities are measured. Political party assistance is the most politically charged type of programming a mission can undertake.
9. Designers of party assistance programs should pay particular attention to the needs of women and other underrepresented groups.

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- Facilitating message and platform development as a means of developing a distinct party image, creating a common vision, and strengthening links with voters
- Raising funds necessary to sustain political parties’ competitiveness in election campaigns and institutional viability
- Enhancing internal party democracy through party by-laws, participatory decision-making, intra-party communication, and transparent leader/candidate selection
- Helping parties in government participate more effectively via coalition-building, legislative drafting, parliamentary procedure, caucuses/committee formation, office operations, and constituency, media, and advocacy group relations

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<sup>10</sup> For example, NDI conducted focus groups with villagers in Benin to determine the issues most important to them. NDI followed this with a survey of party leaders about their issues of priority. The large disconnect allowed NDI to show the party leaders how out of touch they were with their constituents.

While many of the party development skills mentioned here are most relevant for new or poorly institutionalized parties, some may also have relevance for long-established but “ossified” parties. It is also clear that the commitment of party leaders is key to the

success of programs, and that provincial and local party leaders tend to be more receptive to training than national level leaders. The need to guard against the “misappropriation” of training, i.e., when techniques are adopted to make parties stronger without making them more internally democratic, is also worth noting. And given the institutional weaknesses of new parties, their limited absorptive capacity, especially over short periods of time, must be kept in mind.



## V. DONOR ENVIRONMENT ISSUES

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The final set of issues that must be taken into consideration in weighing possibilities for elections assistance is driven by the broader donor environment. Many of the concerns have little or nothing to do with issues arising from the proposed recipient country.

The optimal strategy from an analytical standpoint is not necessarily optimal from a practical one. Donors also have interests, are also constrained by institutions, and also have resource tradeoffs. Too often these considerations are made at the beginning of the DG analysis rather than at the end. The Center takes the approach that a country's character, its challenges, and its resources should first be analyzed. Only then would one move to see how the donor can best help address that problem and what its constraints might be in doing so. Using this approach, it becomes clear what compromises are between the optimal program and the next best, on the one hand, and the program that will actually be implemented, given the donors' interests, resources, and constraints, on the other hand.

### A. U.S. Legal Considerations

As stated earlier, elections and political processes assistance is often more event-driven and political than any other form of democracy assistance. As such, the level of attentiveness to elections assistance programming is often quite high within the U.S. government. Furthermore, statutory language in the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 [Section 116(e)] constrains elections and political processes activities as development assistance funds “may not be used, directly or indirectly, to influence the outcome of any election in any country.” USAID has applied Section 116(e) more broadly to any DG support provided by USAID. The elevated status of

elections assistance, combined with the statutory constraints imposed, serves to make program development and implementation a delicate and often politically charged process.

While U.S. interests favor democratic progress, elections assistance is not necessarily inevitable or straightforward. There may be additional restrictions on foreign aid or sanctions against certain countries resulting from violations of loan repayment requirements, human rights conventions, nuclear non-proliferation pacts, or acts of war. Such restrictions may apply to the country as a whole or only to aid directed at the government. Even the latter will present problems, however, as election commissions are typically government agencies. While assistance is not necessarily precluded, it will require special approval or waivers from the appropriate U.S. government authority.

### B. Program Priorities/Strategic Objectives

Limited resources, contextual factors, and policy considerations help shape the priorities of U.S. foreign assistance. In certain contexts, there may be more of an emphasis on privatization than on democratization; rule of law programming may be deemed more urgent than political party development; or voter information programs may be more feasible than civic education ones. Within USAID, the Agency's Strategic Framework helps to shape DG assistance. Many areas outlined in Agency Objective 2.2 for elections and political process,<sup>11</sup> (more genuine and competitive process) are facilitated by

- An impartial electoral framework
- Credible electoral administration

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<sup>11</sup> See the *Handbook of Democracy and Governance Program Indicators* [ordering information located on back inside cover].

- An informed and active citizenry
- Effective oversight of the electoral process
- A representative and competitive multi-party system
- Inclusion of women and other disadvantaged groups
- Effective transfer of political power

Under most circumstances, USAID Missions will not have the resources to pursue each of these simultaneously. In fact they are not all feasible at the same time. As a result, limited resources may be funneled into one or two intermediate results (IRs), while the remainder is left to other donors or to a later time. The results framework deals mainly with longer-term assistance. Since much of U.S. assistance is short-term and often reflects different priorities than those expressed in the IRs, a special objective may need to be created.

### **C. Available Funding Resources**

Financial realities will determine whether elections assistance is even feasible. Funding availability will affect the scope, nature, and duration of assistance. At some point essentials will need to be separated from non-essentials.<sup>12</sup> Decision-makers must determine whether their stated objectives can be met and preferred projects fulfilled at the existing level of investment. Decision-makers also need to guard against the tendency to cut programming without modifying expectations. All too often, corners are cut, while intended objectives/outcomes remain constant, resulting in considerable gaps between objectives and impact.

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<sup>12</sup> Hirschmann and Mendelson, p. 20.

There are a variety of means to reduce overall costs that may, in addition, contribute to a more successful assistance program. Performance personnel, i.e., those who can provide logistical, organizational, and administrative support, may be used instead of more expensive technical personnel, i.e., experts in the fields of law, election management, or political party building. Programming can be narrowed and less diversified. Civic education may give way to more specific voter education or even to targeted voter information projects. Local organizations may be funded directly in place of USAID's institutional partners. Emphasis may be given to provision of services rather than institution-building, or short-term interventions may be used instead of foreign advisors in the field longer-term. There also may be opportunities to leverage funds if other donors can be brought into the equation.

The source of official U.S. funding will also play a role in who divides funds and how they are used. Some funds, such as IDA, SEED, or freedom support funds, come with notwithstanding authority, allowing maximum flexibility. While USAID serves as the primary conduit for aid in support of political and electoral processes, other funds, such as economic support funds, come directly from State, which is more directly involved in programming these funds. And in some cases, another international organization, such as the U.N., has been designated as the leading assistance provider or coordinator, which impacts what USAID can do. In the case of Bosnia, the Dayton Accords named the OSCE as *the* organization responsible for supervising elections. Coordinating USAID-funded elections-related technical assistance in this environment is a bit trickier and more difficult.

### **D. Capabilities of Institutional Partners**

USAID relies heavily on U.S. NGOs, including NDI, IRI, IFES, The Asia Foundation (TAF),

and the Carter Center, for implementation of political and electoral process assistance, so it is important to understand both the capabilities and limitations of these institutional partners. Decision-makers will want to consider each partner's expertise, track record, rapid-response capability, and ability to remain flexible in rapidly changing environments. Familiarity with comparative systems and approaches, and the use of multi-national teams may also be desirable.

It is entirely possible that some of the institutional partners will already be in-country running programs under funding from other donors, such as the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) or USAID-funded programs that are not election-specific. Or, institutional partners may have already carried out a technical assessment of the pre-electoral environment. Such factors are likely to increase their ability to respond rapidly to a request for assistance and to "hit the ground running." In post-conflict and breakthrough elections, circumstances often dictate that institutional partners take the leading role in implementing assistance. These partners often have established relations with local NGOs and can easily cooperate with and reinforce their efforts.

As countries move toward consolidation, the odds are greater that USAID will give some direct funding to local NGOs to carry out activities such as voter education, election monitoring, parallel vote tabulations, media monitoring, and a variety of training programs. The advantage of using these groups is that they usually have a better understanding of the target audience and programming environment. At the same time, there are some limitations. The institutional capabilities of the organization(s) in question should be critically assessed. Does the organization have the ability to manage the assistance, both programmatically and administratively? How broad a scope can it accommodate with respect to programming?

Decision-makers will also need to be cognizant of the pressures to get foreign funding. In essence, the money chase may mold the identity of the organization rather than its own constituency, mandate, or expertise. There is also the possibility that the NGO is biased toward particular groups in society, such as intellectuals, urban dwellers, and/or ethnic or linguistic groups. If so, how would this affect the quality and integrity of the proposed programming? In some instances, it may well be the case that other international NGOs have more capability to bargain directly with governments.

### **E. Issues of Timing**

Without question, the timing of assistance at an operational level and the timetable for implementing it are important to the effectiveness of the intervention and its prospects for success. The former refers to whether or not the intervention is initiated at the appropriate time in the legislative, political, or electoral process. For example, when will modifications to the election law be debated and adopted? When does voter registration open? When does the nomination period close? What is the deadline for establishing polling sites?

The latter relates to the amount of time allotted for completion of the assistance project. Is it sufficient? Pressures on USAID to pursue ambitious interventions or tackle complex problems can lead to the approval of unrealistic projects in certain contexts. Decision-makers need to be very straightforward with their local cooperating partners and institutional partners about the amount of time available for the completion of the project as the concept is approved, paperwork signed, and funds transferred. USAID should also seek counsel from its institutional partners about the minimum amount of time required to implement projects successfully, so that a sufficient amount of time to complete the program is factored in.

The length of time required for USAID to process cooperative agreements, contracts, and even extensions continues to be viewed by its institutional partners as a setback. Proposed projects can rapidly lose their feasibility if this process takes months. Ultimately, both USAID and the institutional partners may find themselves in an uncomfortable situation, i.e., contractually obligated to implement a project that clearly cannot be completed within the time remaining, therefore undermining the prospects for success. This may also lead to redundant expenditures over time, and DG officers should remain aware that both the mission and the partner will be held accountable by independent evaluators.

Such a situation also causes frustration among, and tensions with, local cooperating partners, who may be in the heat of campaign activities or election preparations by the time assistance teams arrive on the ground. At that point, they may be unable to provide the attention or support required to implement the project. Many express a sense of being overwhelmed and lament, “if only you had arrived earlier.” And, in some cases, tension can arise between assistance providers under pressure to complete their mission and election managers trying to provide the minimum conditions for holding the election. This situation may be particularly acute if there are many donors or assistance providers demanding the attention and support of election managers. It cannot be stressed enough that one needs to begin developing and implementing elections assistance as early as possible. It should also be mentioned that one should consult with regional bureaus and the Center to determine whether buy-in capability or access to mechanisms with forward funding possibilities is available before developing a separate procurement instrument to implement mission-specific activity.

## **F. Donor Coordination Options**

As indicated above, the involvement of multiple donors is often a factor. There is a wide range of organizations that provide electoral assistance. In addition to bilateral donors such as Canada, France, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the Scandinavian countries, there are a number of international organizations that provide electoral assistance. These include the U.N. through the UNDP, IDEA, the Commonwealth Nations, the European Union, the Organization of African Unity, OAS, and OSCE. NGOs such as the German political foundations, the British Know-How Fund, and Westminster Foundation may also provide electoral assistance. Most of these groups have vast experience in electoral assistance, established methodologies and practices, and particular political interests that may or may not be entirely compatible with U.S. government interests.

If there is a large number of donors, coordination will be required to avoid redundancy, provide coherence to the assistance effort, and manage the number of people and requests inundating the election commission. It is also a chance to ascertain that critical and absolutely necessary requirements are being met, not just “wish lists.” With the participation of several donors there is an opportunity to pool resources and assign responsibilities in a manner that best meets each agency’s mandate, priorities, and capabilities. For example, if USAID prefers to undertake training and educational programs, but not provide commodities assistance, then another donor may assume that responsibility. Similarly, if one agency is in a position to respond more quickly than the rest, this may greatly influence the division of labor. Political sensitivities may also play a role. In some contexts, a U.S. presence may be welcomed, while in others it could be contentious, perhaps even becoming a central issue in the election campaign. Under such circumstances, it may be best for other donor

countries to play the leading role with the United States keeping a lower profile.

At the same time, coordination can be a tricky business, with each agency seeking to leave its unique mark on the electoral process and be able to claim credit for successful elections. And, it is possible that the assistance objectives of other countries or donor agencies are quite dissimilar from those of USAID. As a result, there may be some resistance to coordination or difficulty in articulating a common vision. There may also be a tendency on the part of some donors to over-estimate capabilities, to promise more than can be delivered, or to extend institutional mandates.





## VII. MANAGING ELECTORAL ASSISTANCE

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At the point that assistance moves from the conceptual to the implementation phase (to be undertaken by USAID’s cooperating partners), the focus of the DG officer will turn to the management of electoral assistance. The range of issues central to effective management includes conditioning factors, such as the timing of assistance, the ability of the mission to manage the proposed activities, and the receptivity of the host-country government; cooperation with other U.S. agencies; work with institutional partners; funding mechanisms; and donor coordination. This section details the impacts these factors have on successful electoral assistance.

### A. Conditioning Factors

Just as design of electoral assistance can be complex, there are several factors that can either facilitate or impede the smooth and effective implementation and management of electoral assistance activities.

#### 1. *Timing of Assistance*

Timing is frequently, if not always, critical to effective implementation. A clear idea of how long the activity is likely to take given the available resources and programming context is crucial. It is equally important to know when the activity should be initiated in order for it to be conducted in a timely and opportune manner. The larger and more complex the activity, the longer the lead-time necessary. Preparing the initial assessment for the activity, drafting a scope of work, preparing a contracting mechanism, analysis and award of a contract, and arrival of an expatriate technical assistance team or the recruitment of a team of local

assistance providers can sometimes be a lengthy process. The time required from germination of the idea for the activity to placement of a technical team on the ground may be anywhere from three months for a relatively small short-term intervention to one year or longer for a multi-million-dollar, competitively bid contract requiring resident advisors and complex logistics. Even a relatively simple assessment task can take three months before the team is authorized and ready to begin fieldwork—start early.

It is important to measure the nature and time requirements of these tasks against the type of activity and objective to be accomplished. Once a date is set for an election, programming needs to take into account that certain activities must be accomplished by established deadlines in advance of that date:

- Advisors should be on the ground while elections legislation or amendments are being drafted and debated in parliament. Lobbying for changes in the midst of the election campaign before an election commission without the power or authority to change laws will be ineffective.
- For voter registration assistance, including public or voter education, technical advisors need to be in place well before the registration process begins.
- It is usually preferable to initiate assistance to political parties before the beginning of the candidate nomination process. Not infrequently, the embassy, the USAID Mission, or the institutional partners will identify a cut-off date in order to avoid any perception of partisanship. This cut-off date represents the last deadline for campaign-related assistance to the parties prior to an election. This period has tended to be 30

days before the election. An exemption is given for assistance to political party pollwatcher training efforts, as such activities are not influencing the outcome of the elections in favor of only one political party.

- Since polling site commissioners are established and pollworkers assigned shortly before election day, they have an extremely compressed timeframe in which to complete an assortment of tasks. As a result, training programs and training materials should be ready for use by the date that they are appointed.

The Center's elections and political processes funding mechanisms (cooperative agreements and indefinite quantity contracts) available to missions and regional bureaus include rapid-response funding as key components.

## **2. *Management Capacity***

The ability of the mission to manage the proposed election activity will be critical to the achievement of stated objectives. It is extremely important that, before the mission decides to go ahead with an election activity or project, it carefully assess its ability to take on and effectively manage the tasks involved. By and large, elections assistance consumes a good deal of time, is highly management intensive, and requires constant communication.

It should be remembered that election activities by the mission are highly political activities. As a result, there will be a premium on effective management. Where activities are poorly managed, the risk of negative repercussions (such as accusations of interference or partiality) for the embassy and the U.S. government increases rapidly.

Because of its political nature, elections assistance can be management intensive—with a

considerable number of meetings to coordinate among various stakeholders. Assistance is usually considered a team activity between the embassy, the USAID Mission (including sometimes the OTI office), and other donor organizations as well as the implementing partners. Coordination and meetings will be necessary between host-country institutions involved in or receiving aid, and with the implementing partners. Finally, because elections programming is often intensive and time-compressed, so too is the management of an elections activity.

If the elections assistance fits directly into the mission's results framework, it is likely to have been initiated by the mission itself. If not, it is probable that the mission's planning has not anticipated the activity and it may be an extra management burden for the mission. The DG field officer is less likely to be taken by surprise, however, if he/she maintains a reasonable state of awareness of political events, and is attentive to concerns about the electoral environment raised by the embassy and others in country team meetings.

Careful selection of implementing partners can often save considerable management time. Opportunities for greater involvement of foreign service nationals (FSNs) in the mission have been provided by the Agency's re-engineering initiatives. It is no longer unusual in missions to find most of the democracy programming managed by FSNs. Where appropriate, this can be a considerable advantage in that most FSNs have a more comprehensive grasp of local politics and its subtleties, as well as a base of experience to judge what sorts of activities are feasible and which are not.

## **3. *Local or Host-country Receptivity***

Host-country receptivity to the proposed activity is important to its success and effectiveness. Someone should want and welcome the

assistance. Without a minimum degree of receptivity, implementation is extremely difficult. Perhaps the best case is when one or another host-country stakeholder makes a clearly defined request for some type of assistance, and when that request squares nicely with the mission's country strategy. Even if the initial idea for the activity was generated by the mission, a serious effort should be made to obtain input and involvement from local stakeholders such as NGOs, political parties, or, where appropriate, government institutions. There are also instances when there is strong external pressure on the USAID Mission to "do something" during an election and where considerable funding accompanies that pressure. Nonetheless, participation and involvement of host-country stakeholders in the design process can spell the difference between success and failure.

While electoral assistance might find strong receptivity on the part of some actors, others may be less than enthused or even vehemently opposed. Once again, it is important to recall that elections assistance is politically sensitive and that support can easily be perceived as partisan. This may be particularly true with assistance to political parties—hence the U.S. mandate to work with all parties committed to the democratization process. Even seemingly innocuous support to election commissions, which are usually government agencies, might be seen as an endorsement of the government and/or the ruling party. In the event of a full or partial boycott of the election by opposition groups, non-partisan voter education or GOTV activities will take on a political hue. If assistance goes to international or domestic monitoring groups, it may be viewed by the government as an attack on its legitimacy. Or, the presence of international observers might be viewed by some opposition and dissident groups as conferring legitimacy to what they anticipate will be a corrupt process. Where assistance is likely to provoke heated criticism on the part of

important actors, it behooves the DG officer to exercise caution and ensure that the country team is in the loop and kept apprised of potential fallout.

## **B. Cooperation with Other U.S. Agencies**

Given the highly political and sensitive nature of elections assistance, USAID cooperation and collaboration with other U.S. government agencies is generally necessary if not always obligatory. If the funding source for assistance is through economic support funds, State usually plays a key role in decisions regarding if, how, and when such funds will be used. State's Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, as well as the appropriate regional bureau, is usually involved.

In Washington, coordination is maintained through USAID regional bureaus, technical offices, and desks; the Center; and desk officers at State. In U.S. missions, it has become established in-country practice for election work to be seen as a U.S. government team initiative involving the USAID Mission (including OTI if present), and the U.S. Embassy.

Quite frequently, other members of the U.S. mission country team (e.g., public affairs and the political section of the U.S. Embassy) expect to play an active role. Depending on the nature and political sensitivity of the proposed or ongoing election assistance activity, they may become involved in the conceptual and planning stages and will expect to be updated regularly throughout the implementation phase. Such entities may also provide useful information that will serve in the strategic planning process. Also, and in contrast to most development projects, implementers of elections activities are often required to provide regular briefings to the country team.

## C. Cooperation with Partners<sup>13</sup>

### 1. *International Partners*

There exist several types of international partner organizations, each with its own set of strengths and weaknesses. The most prominent of these are the two U.S. political party affiliated groups, NDI and IRI; IFES also plays an important role in implementing elections programs. All three groups work extensively with USAID, and are currently partners on the CEPPS cooperative agreement issued through the Center. In addition, the Center now has two new indefinite quantity contracts (IQCs) that can be used to access the experience of IFES, Development Associates, and the Carter Center. (See the Center's *User's Guide* for information on how to access these mechanisms.)

NDI and IRI are also core grantees of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and receive significant funds from other sources. Recently, IFES has begun to participate with private firms and other organizations to compete for USAID contracts and cooperative agreements. The Asia Foundation and the Carter Center also have extensive elections assistance experience. In addition, some USAID regional bureaus and many missions have direct grant agreements with many of these organizations.

Each of these organizations has strengths that make it a valuable partner for USAID; these include particular expertise in select aspects, such as media and civil society. The groups all have extensive experience with USAID headquarters and field missions and in the development of proposals and designs for project activity. They have notable capabilities for rapid response, particularly in emergency situations, through a large cadre of volunteers;

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<sup>13</sup> This section draws heavily, and often verbatim, from Hirschmann and Mendelson, *op. cit.*

initiative and on-the-ground adaptability; a network of U.S. and foreign experts; pre-existing relationships with other donor agencies; and a strong commitment to developing democracy skills and to working with local partners.

Professional organizations [e.g., American Bar Association (ABA), and regional election associations or institutes such as the Latin American Center for Electoral Support (CAPEL) and the Association of Central and Eastern European Elections Officers] are characterized by their access to a pool of very highly trained and experienced practitioners. They may specialize in particular areas, such as the ABA with assistance on legal framework issues, or in particular regions, such as CAPEL in Latin America. These practitioners are often influential, and may collaborate on a *pro bono* basis.

One perceived drawback of some of these groups is their limited regional focus, which could result in a lack of international (cross-regional) comparative insight. Another is that some organizations that rely heavily on volunteers are able to send personnel only for very short-term visits and may not be able to provide follow-up.

### 2. *Local Partners*

The use of local partners for implementation of election-related activities can be extremely advantageous and effective, but it is not without drawbacks. Frequently, local organizations, with their familiarity with the local political-economic-administrative environment, traditions, customs, and practices, are in a better position to analyze legal codes, monitor elections, or provide voter education. There are many impressive examples of local NGOs and NGO networks playing critical roles in elections around the world: National Citizens Movement for Free Elections (Philippines), Bulgarian

Association for Free Elections (Bulgaria), Center for NGO Assistance (Romania), and the Alianza Civica (Mexico). Given the need to mobilize large numbers of people, election monitoring efforts will invariably require use of local NGOs or NGO networks.

When local and international partners work together on mission projects, or when the international organization provides funding to the local organization (as a sub-grant, service contract, or pass-through), the relationship can be a sensitive one. The international partner should be fully respectful of the local group's expertise, insight, and experience. In many instances, the former will rely heavily on the local partner for analysis of the political/electoral environment and interpretation of customs and practices. At the same time, the partner's capabilities should not be over-estimated. Not infrequently, there is a temptation to smother a promising NGO with money and/or to assume that it is capable of any task. The fact that local leaders often find it difficult to say no to significant windfalls of resources contributes to the problem. Hirschmann and Mendelson argue that international NGOs should not attempt to run or micro-manage domestic groups; these groups should be allowed to face their own crises and learn from their own mistakes.<sup>14</sup> Consideration needs to be given to institutional strengthening and sustainability of local NGOs so that they can meet growing expectations. In certain cases, it may be necessary to make training and other types of assistance a condition to receiving a grant to carry out particular activities.

It is imperative that local NGOs be carefully selected by the mission before involving them as partners. Some local NGOs come with serious problems or defects: leaders may be incompetent or corrupt, there may be hidden agendas at odds

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 24.

with mission interests, there may be significant intolerance of other organizations or groups based on ethnic or religious differences, or the group may have overly partisan inclinations. Partisanship is often a thorny issue, and sometimes not particularly obvious. In states emerging from authoritarian or one-party rule, groups eager to assist in the first multi-party election are almost always tied to an opposition party or have their own activist agenda. When faced with this option, it is important to provide instruction stressing the importance of non-partisan behavior to the electoral process, the essential requirements of a non-partisan code of conduct, and the need for a public commitment to non-partisanship. Where partisanship is so intense as to provoke distrust, it is preferable to avoid using local NGOs in activities in which their partisanship would undermine their legitimacy.

During the assessment process it is also important to determine the institutional capacity of an organization. What can it do? What might it be capable of doing with added training or more financial resources? How much linkage does it have to its grassroots base? What will it take to make the group a reliable service provider? It is also important to assess its "grant-worthiness," which relates to the administrative and financial management of the organization. To receive funding the organization must be able to meet minimum audit standards. If it does not have adequate financial capacity, is another organization available to act as financial intermediary? Would it be able and willing to provide its services as part of a larger network arrangement?

#### **D. Implementing Mechanisms**

At USAID, there are several mechanisms available for implementing electoral assistance activities. Each mechanism has advantages and disadvantages, so it is incumbent on the DG field officer to carefully assess the type or mix

that will most adequately suit the needs of the mission and the circumstances in which the activities are to be implemented.

### *1. Cooperative Agreements*

Missions may develop cooperative agreements with either international or domestic partners. Cooperative agreements are used by both USAID/Washington (e.g., Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening, CEPPS) and by missions. Cooperative agreements allow some substantial USAID involvement, which is written into the award. Cooperative agreements can be responsive and flexible, especially in changing circumstances. CEPPS is particularly useful because it allows for mission and bureau activities to be forward-funded, thereby enabling quick start-up of activities.

### *2. Grants*

Grants are commonly used to support the activities of local partners (NGOs, CSOs, local academic or training institutes, etc.) when those activities fall within the USAID Mission's strategic framework. Once awarded, however, it may be difficult to hold the grantee to USAID standards and results. Missions often create a sub-granting mechanism within a cooperative agreement with one of the international partners. The partner then has the responsibility for establishing rules and procedures for awards and management of the sub-grants within USAID's regulations. In a very fluid environment, having a grantee meet USAID's changing needs may also be rather difficult.

### *3. Contracts*

Contracts are generally awarded to private sector firms and tend to be used very infrequently with non-profit democracy-related NGOs. They are almost never used to monitor elections in order to maintain some distance between the

monitoring organization and the U.S. government, and to allow autonomy. On the plus side, firms can provide strong financial and managerial capacity—skills particularly useful for large, complex projects—and broad pools of highly qualified and experienced consultants from which to recruit. Because the relationship is contractual, firms can be held accountable for satisfactorily fulfilling the terms of reference. However, contracts usually require considerably more work and lead-time than other mechanisms since they must be competed (there are some exceptions: sole-source contracts, which require specific waiver of competition, and purchase orders for under \$25,000), and then follow strict standards for award. Private firms tend to be more expensive because of high overhead, and may not have permanent in-house expertise or in-country support networks. Contracts also take a considerable amount of time to manage, since USAID exercises more direct control over the work of the contractor.

While not election-specific implementing mechanisms, opportunities to use existing contracts or cooperative agreements in other areas to support elections activity may exist. As mentioned earlier, other IQCs might be accessed, but existing mission contracts or cooperative agreements for activities in other areas might also be able to accommodate certain kinds of election-related activity as well. For instance, in Honduras, advocacy efforts to change the election law to establish separate ballots for local elections, and then voter education activity to provide instruction on the new system was financed through a municipal development project implemented by the Honduran Municipalities Association.

### *4. Task Orders*

Task orders (also known as delivery orders or buy-ins) may be used to access IQC held by one or more implementing organizations. Two new IQCs were recently awarded for five years: one

to IFES and the other to Development Associates. The Center has issued the IFES task order to allow quick response for missions and regional bureaus. In addition, the IQCs awarded for civil society might be used to support activities related to strengthening voter and civic education capacities of certain CSOs. Task orders require specific scopes of work and thus provide less flexibility than the cooperative agreement. They may be used for both short- and long-term activities.

### **E. Coordination with other Donors**

Coordinating efforts at some level, even if only information, can provide significant benefits from merely avoiding duplication and stepping on one another's toes, to leveraging a relatively small amount of resources into a much larger effort. Coordination can also help to assure more timely, sequenced, and appropriate assistance at both the pre- and post-electoral stages. Early on in any proposed activity, the DG field officer needs to contact other bilateral and multi-lateral donors, international financial institutions, and NGOs to find out what they are providing or planning in the way of election support or assistance.

Methods for coordination can range from relatively low-level activities, such as establishing an e-mail network to exchange information, to developing joint decision-making bodies to manage collective activities.

Even in the best of circumstances, coordination is no simple task. The DG field officer should be aware that, while there may be significant benefits to coordination, significant costs are usually attached. Joint activities are not simple matters to carry out. Who will take the lead? Will changes need to be made in anticipated objectives in order to accommodate another group's interests? Will there be appearance problems if the United States is in the lead? Alternatively, can other donors be brought in to

provide elections programming? Even relatively low-level efforts such as information exchange have costs: there will be briefings to prepare and read, and meetings to attend.

Bearing these issues in mind, however, can help the DG field officer managing successful donor coordination. In situations where such coordination is used effectively, individual donors have saved time, conserved resources, avoided duplication, and improved the larger DG working environment. Coordination has immense benefits, but only if managed well.





## VIII. CONCLUSION

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Through the course of its work in elections assistance with its implementing partners, USAID has learned several important lessons. The macro lessons listed below should assist in guiding officers toward successful elections assistance programming:

1. Take into account precedents and legacies from past elections. Elections do not occur in a vacuum, nor should strategic planning for elections assistance.
2. Consider consultative processes and assessments that engage local stakeholders. These can enhance host-country commitment to programming (and, therefore, improve chances of sustainability) and develop a more accurate sense of assistance needs.
3. Incorporate and support indigenous initiatives, rather than relying solely on donor-initiated activities.
4. With tight budgets and scarce resources, develop programming and activities that reinforce previous or ongoing programs and reforms.
5. Make an effort to tie programs more closely to strategic objectives rather than highly opportunistic interventions.
6. Recognize that donor coordination is crucial in elections assistance.
7. Work with local partners that are invested in the electoral process and committed to working toward program ends.
8. Recognize the relationship between political party development and the electoral process.
9. Work to make funding commensurate with program objectives. With competing programmatic needs, it is vital to have a realistic allocation plan.
10. Encourage coordination/cooperation/unity between the mission and the embassy. This is crucial to success of elections assistance programs in contentious political environments.
11. Undertake several complementary activities rather than a single activity. This increases the likelihood of effecting change.
12. Do not ignore the electoral process. It is essential if there is a real interest in democratization and systemic reform.
13. Have different organizations providing elections assistance and monitoring the assistance.
14. Assign elections monitoring to a contract implementing mechanism.
15. Limit the number of groups performing elections observation. This will help to avoid duplication.
16. Start early! Long-term attention is critical to free and fair elections. As there are a number of complex issues, an early start is essential.



# **Appendices**



# APPENDIX A:

## TOOLS FOR ELECTORAL ASSISTANCE\*

### I. PRE-ELECTION TECHNICAL ASSESSMENT

There are several types of pre-election technical assessments (PETAs). Regardless of which is selected, the USAID official and the partner tasked with carrying out the PETA need to be clear about what might be expected.

- Decision-making. A PETA may provide important input to decide whether or not to go ahead with an electoral assistance activity or program. The main purpose is to determine whether the political/institutional conditions are right or not for proceeding with electoral assistance.
- Technical needs assessment. PETAs may be helpful in defining the nature and scope of assistance, priority-setting, donor coordination activities, and establishing the rationale for choosing one kind of activity over another. The host government may view this as the first step in the assistance process, i.e., a commitment to material support of some kind.
- Assessing strengths and weaknesses. These assessments examine the institutional framework (e.g., the legal framework, election management structures, voting rights, complaint mechanisms), the quality and integrity of the process, and the prospects for a legitimate outcome. They may also serve as baselines against which developments during the course of the election and over time can be measured.

PETAs may be multi-functional, and different types carried out by different institutional partners. PETAs are most frequently carried out in post-conflict settings (when time allows) or for breakthrough elections and/or where little is known about the political/institutional environment for elections. They can also help monitor improvements.

### II. ON-SITE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

On-site technical assistance refers to any number of possible activities used to strengthen election systems and political parties, carried out by USAID's institutional partners in the field.

#### *Personnel*

Long-term personnel: Where there is a shortage of qualified personnel or lack of local capacity, institutional partners may provide expatriate personnel as adjunct staff to support or supplement the work of the election commission to assist in and assure implementation during the actual course of the election.

Short-term experts: USAID's partners may provide *short-term technical experts* to advise and/or train parliamentary bodies, the election commission, the judiciary, political parties, or NGOs on select components of the political and electoral process. They tend to be specialists in specific technical areas

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\* This section draws heavily from a number of sources, including *Managing Democratic Electoral Assistance: A Practical Guide for USAID* by David Hirschmann and Johanna Mendelson, and a series of "How-To" manuals produced by IFES.

such as constitutional or electoral law, voter registration, campaign finance, or information technologies. They may be on-site during the course of a particular election (working alongside performance personnel) or for a protracted period of time, or provide intermittent short-term assistance.

### *Commodities*

Commodities may be in the form of capital equipment, supplies consumed during the course of the election, or services (specialized tasks performed for the election). In post-conflict and breakthrough elections, commodities assistance may be crucial to the very conduct of elections. In certain contexts, commodities may be vital to implementation of electoral reforms, such as in the application of modern technologies to voter registration or vote counting processes. As other international donor organizations have developed significant commodity support programs, we prefer that such entities take the lead in commodity delivery to election commissions. USAID programs should reflect our comparative advantage in providing technical assistance rather than commodities.

The list of commodities provided by USAID is extensive and includes ballots, indelible ink, optical scanners, ballot boxes, secrecy booths, generators, light sources, radio equipment, audio-visual equipment, cameras, vehicles, computers (and all related hardware and software), office equipment, batteries, film, and a host of basic supplies. A needs assessment will usually be required to determine what and how much assistance should be provided. With commodities assistance comes the responsibility of seeing that equipment and supplies are properly procured, shipped, inventoried, stored, delivered, used, and, if applicable, recovered and available for future elections.

While commodities are primarily given to election commissions, some equipment and supplies may also be given to foster the institutional development of NGOs active in voter education, public advocacy, and domestic monitoring (including media monitoring and parallel vote tabulations). Commodities, on exception, are rarely given to political parties due to USAID's policy of not directly or indirectly influencing the outcome of an election. (See *USAID Political Party Development Assistance*.) Commodities assistance is expensive and, in some cases, may involve recurrent costs. As such, budgetary constraints, options for leveraged assistance, and local sustainability and replicability need to be taken into consideration.

### *Financial Support*

Direct or indirect financial support to the election commission or NGOs may be provided, but never to political parties. Occasionally, where the election commission does not have the funds to pay pollworkers or technical staff, institutional partners may cover payroll to ensure that adequate staff to conduct the elections are in place. More frequently, institutional partners may finance activities of a local NGO through a service contract or a sub-grant. A service contract is usually for implementation of a specific task or activity, such as a voter education campaign or a media monitoring effort. A sub-grant, on the other hand, may focus more on institution building, for example making sure the NGO has the necessary equipment, training, and management and technical expertise required to fulfill its mandate. An informal domestic monitoring group might, for example, develop the know-how to perform parallel vote tabulations or transform itself into a public watchdog organization. Some NGOs may qualify for direct grants from USAID.

### *Training*

Training is an important element of technical assistance. It may be directed at voter registrars, election commission staff, pollworkers, parliamentarians, judges, candidates, campaign workers, political party staff, domestic monitors, and NGO activists. The training program may be designed, instructional and reference materials designed, and training carried out by the institutional partners' on-site personnel.

Limitations of time and resources may necessitate that expatriate experts directly train pollworkers or domestic monitors. If not, a training of local trainers for a cascading effect is favored.

Short-term assistance for elections typically features training for pollworkers and domestic monitors. Beyond providing an orientation to election law and polling site procedure, training efforts seek to foster a sense of ethical conduct among participants. While pollworker and domestic monitor training are usually initiated as part of a broader legitimizing assistance program, it is expected that the newly trained cadre will work in future elections, thus providing an institutional capacity building benefit.

Training efforts for consolidating elections focus on building the capacity of election management bodies and responding to significant changes to election law and procedure. Appointment of permanent election managers or re-organization of an existing election commission, application of modern technologies, or adoption of a continuous voter registry, for example, may all require specialized training programs. Appropriate election commission staff might receive training in financial or personnel management, regulatory drafting, information technology, or public relations. At this stage, attention might also turn to training judges in the specifics of campaigns and elections law. The introduction of a special court to adjudicate election-related grievances will probably signal the need for training. Parliamentary committees tasked with overhaul of the legal framework for elections may find training in legislative drafting particularly useful. NGOs might benefit from training in how to carry out voter education, media monitoring, or parallel vote tabulation projects.

### **III. OFF-SITE OPTIONS**

Perhaps not the main focus of electoral assistance, off-site options may serve either to supplement on-site activities or as a low-cost alternative during longer-term elections assistance programs:

- U.S.-based training programs, for example, may incorporate a political and electoral process component appropriate for election officials, political party representatives, and select NGO activists.
- USAID's institutional partners may also be conducting training programs in neighboring countries that could accommodate third country participants. In the case of some conflict or authoritarian environments, specially tailored training programs are offered "across the border." For such programs to work, however, participants need to have some freedom of movement between countries.
- Quite a number of regional associations, including regional political party networks, have begun to crop up, such as the Association of Central and East European Election Officials (ACEEEO) based in Budapest, that provide routine opportunities for professional development.
- Local experts and practitioners have also begun to serve as members of international election observation missions for the party institutes, IFES, and the regional associations.
- One example of a cost-saving measure is an off-site review of and commentary on campaigns and elections legislation. This type of effort, however, is limited by an inability to interact with local political actors or assess the electoral environment.



**APPROPRIATE TOOLS BASED ON ASSISTANCE TYPE**

**Note:** The following table serves to illustrate the types of mechanisms used for short-term (S) and long-term (L) assistance under a number of technical categories. The table is not intended to be exhaustive. An "X" suggests that an activity is predominantly, though not exclusively, a short-term or long-term activity.

ASSISTANCE MECHANISM	LEGAL FRAMEWORK		ELECTION MANAGEMENT		VOTER EDUCATION		ELECTION OBSERVATION & COMPLAINT RESOLUTION	
	S	L	S	L	S	L	S	L
<b>PRE-ELECTION TECHNICAL ASSESSMENT</b>								
Feasibility Assessment		X		X		X		X
Needs Assessment		X		X		X		X
Electoral Environment Assessment		X		X		X		X
<b>ON-SITE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE</b>								
Personnel								
<i>Performance Staff</i>			X					
<i>Technical Advisors</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Commodities								
<i>Capital</i>			X	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Supplies</i>			X					
<i>Services</i>			X					
Training								
<i>Voter Registrars</i>			X	X				
<i>Pollworkers</i>			X					
<i>Elec. Com. Staff</i>		X	X	X	X	X		X
<i>Domestic Monitors</i>							X	
<i>NGO Activists</i>					X	X	X	X
<i>Parliamentarians</i>		X						
<i>Judges</i>								X
<b>OFF-SITE OPTIONS</b>								
Legal Review	X	X						
Participation in Intl. Election Observation								X
U.S.-based Training		X		X		X		X
Third Country Training		X		X		X		X
Professional Assoc.'s				X				

## **APPENDIX B:**

# **LINKING OPTIONS TO STRATEGIC FRAMEWORKS**

It is frequently the case that elections assistance is a response to external (to the USAID Mission) pressure to provide some sort of support to the electoral process. This type of short-term assistance is typically implemented in close proximity to the date of the election. As a consequence, there may be little time to take appropriate steps to ensure that the activities undertaken are actually a good fit with the mission's overall strategy. In the development of institutionalizing assistance, however, there should be ample opportunity to assure conformance to mission strategy. DG field officers may anticipate at least three different roles for elections assistance. These include

### **Integral**

Here, the assistance activity fits fully with the mission strategy. Its design will more than likely be a direct outgrowth of the assessment process required for strategy development. It is highly likely that this assistance activity will reflect a developmental focus and will be linked to one of the mission's regular strategic objectives, most likely in the area of elections and political processes, via one of its intermediate results. In designing the activity, close and strict attention must be paid to the indicators developed for the intermediate result to ensure that the scope of work calls for the appropriate activities. Like the formulation of strategic objectives in other areas, the process of design can be aided and often much improved by the inclusion of local partners as part of an extended objective team.

### **Special Objective**

A demand for elections assistance may arise that was not contemplated in the assessment carried out to develop the mission's country strategy. Thus, there may be no comfortable fit with any existing objective or its intermediate results. This may be the case when a breakthrough election is announced or when changes in the political environment permit election assistance. Demand may also be created from outside the mission. A significant amount of funding may become available if an upcoming election is determined to be important to U.S. government interests. Where this is the case and/or where large scale activities are proposed, a special objective may be developed.

These objectives are designed to fit specific activities, and are frequently of relatively short duration (i.e., to cover a specific period, but which may be a year or longer, in the run-up to an election campaign). Before the special objective is designed, an assessment should be carried out. Input from the assessment can then be used to formulate the intermediate results and indicators for the special objective. While termed a special objective, the process of design is not significantly different than for other mission strategic objectives.

### **Emergency Assistance**

When a snap election is called, the mission will likely have little time even to formulate a special objective. But there may be sufficient interest and/or demand for the mission to develop activities as a type of emergency assistance in support of the elections process. While this assistance may be completely unrelated to any of its strategic objectives or intermediate results, attention should nevertheless be given to designing activities that can produce measurable results. If there is little or no time for a formal assessment, techniques for rapid assessment\* can be helpful in providing necessary input to designing the activity. It is also useful to conduct a post-mortem once the activity is finished as an informal evaluation or as a mechanism to analyze the usefulness and feasibility of follow-on activities and to assess the need to include elections programming in the mission's strategic framework.

### **Developing Indicators and Reporting Results**

The Agency's manual on the development of indicators and reporting results contains extensive guidance on indicators, data gathering and the reporting of results for the Results Framework prepared by the Elections and Political Processes team in the Center for Democracy and Governance in USAID Washington.\*\* Missions should refer to this manual in developing results packages for electoral and political process activities. While this guidance should be of enormous utility in the preparation of strategic objectives, it can also be useful in framing scopes of work and reporting results even in the cases of emergency assistance.

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\* Hirschmann and Mendelson, op. cit., 1998.

\*\* See the *Handbook of Democracy and Governance Program Indicators*.



## **APPENDIX C: ESSENTIAL POLITICAL PARTY FUNCTIONS AND ASSOCIATED SKILLS**

Political parties are distinguished from all other organizations in that they seek to contest and hold public office directly. The essential functions of political parties, as well as the basic skills needed by parties if they are to carry out those functions effectively, are summarized in Table 8: *Essential Political Party Functions and Associated Skills*. The top row of the table sets out six defining functions of political parties (A-F). While other organizations, such as interest or advocacy groups, perform some of these functions as well, only political parties perform, or strive to perform, all of them. Under each of these functions is a list of the skills needed by parties in order to carry them out (rows 1-16). An ‘x’ indicates a carry-over of the skill described at the beginning of that row.

This table is designed to help program planners think about political party development in terms of strategic objectives, results, and intermediate results. The first step, of course, is to assess both the overall political context and the strengths and weaknesses of existing parties. Priorities for party assistance will also depend upon the specific goals of the U.S. government in providing assistance. For example, is the purpose to legitimize a given electoral process, or is it to build long-term capacity? Depending upon overall program goals, any one or combination of the functions arrayed in the top row might serve as the basis for a political party development “Intermediate Result” under a USAID DG strategic objective. The skills which head up each of the succeeding rows can be read as possible Intermediate Results.

For example, suppose a DG program’s strategic objective includes “improving the capacity of political parties to compete effectively in elections” as one of its Intermediate Results. Under column D, the table provides an idea of the skills parties need to compete effectively in elections. One could design a party development program for this result around this particular skill set, with improvements in each skill set denoting an Intermediate Result.

Note, however, that these same skills are also important for other essential party functions. For example, the ability to mobilize resources is necessary for a party to perform any of the six functions. In addition, the first six skills identified as important for helping parties to compete more effectively in elections also strengthen parties’ ability to perform three other basic functions: articulate ideas and interests and mobilize followers; aggregate and broker interests and demands; and recruit, select, and appoint office-holders. Thus, one can also read the table from left to right, starting from the skill sets that head each of the rows. For example, a program that included activities designed to help parties mobilize resources, reach out to followers and potential followers, and formulate and communicate a message would contribute significantly to parties’ ability to perform the first four functions, and others besides.

A. <i>Articulate ideas/ interests and mobilize followers</i>	B. <i>Aggregate and broker interests and demands</i>	C. <i>Recruit, select, and appoint office-holders</i>	D. <i>Compete in elections</i>	E. <i>Translate demands into government programs</i>	F. <i>Serve as a check on government</i>
1. Mobilize resources		x	x	x	x
2. Understand policy issues, legal structure, government structure	x		x	x	x
3. Reach out to followers and potential followers	x	x	x (organize a campaign, use media effectively)	x	x
4. Formulate and communicate a message	x	x (may require a different message/incentive structure)	x (esp. use of media)		
5. Build internal organizational structure to facilitate outreach	x	x	x (organize a campaign)		
6. Provide political socialization	x	x (in form of a 'party line' to attract/ guide office-holders)	x		
7.	Have knowledge of/ links to other pol./societal groups	x	x (possible coalition building)	x	
8.	Build external negotiating/ brokering skills		x (possible coalition building)	x	
9.		Build internal brokering skills		x	
10.				Be able to generate viable policy alternatives	x
11.		Provide selective incentives to attract candidates (material and non-material)			
12.				Have knowledge of alternative strategies and institutional arrangements to achieve policy goals	x
13.				Communicate policy actions, successes and failures to broader public	x
14.				Understand leg. process, legal sys./ judicial framework	x (and how to get resource through legal institutions)
15.				Act in concert with other social and political groups	x
16.				Act effectively in parl./ministries/ local government	x

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

AAI	African American Institute
ABA	American Bar Association
ACEEEO	Association of Central and East European Election Officials (Hungary)
AMHON	Honduran Association of Municipalities
CAPEL	Latin American Center for Electoral Support (Costa Rica)
CEPPS	Consortium for Election and Political Process Strengthening
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CSO	Civil Society Organization
FAA	Foreign Assistance Act (1961)
FSN	Foreign Service National
GOTV	Get-Out-The-Vote
IDEA	Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (Sweden)
IQC	Indefinite Quantity Contract
IFES	International Foundation for Election Systems
IRI	International Republican Institute
MSI	Management Systems International
NAMFREL	National Citizens Movement for Free Elections (Philippines)
NDI	National Democratic Institute for International Affairs
NED	National Endowment for Democracy
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
NSC	National Security Council
OAS	Organization of American States
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
OTI	Office of Transition Initiatives
PVT	Parallel Vote Tabulation
TOT	Training of Trainers
UEC	Universal Electoral Code
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
USG	U.S. Government

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Note:** *The following glossary is specifically tailored to this manual. Terms are defined within the context of campaigns and elections and related assistance programming and do not necessarily reflect their broader meanings and applicability.*

**Accountability:** A situation in which those who are elected are duly installed in elective office, recognize their responsibility to the electorate, and understand that voters retain the right to vote them out of office for failing to fulfill their obligations.

**Ad Hoc Committee:** A temporary commission established within a particular house of parliament, between houses of parliament, or between branches of government, e.g., the legislative and executive branches, to develop new or modify existing legislation on elections.

**Administrative Remedy:** The redress of election-related grievances by an election commission or other administrative body.

**Blue Ribbon Panel:** A specially constituted group of experts, often appointed or endorsed by the president, to develop policy guidelines, reform proposals, or draft language for consideration by the executive and legislative branches of government as part of the election law reform process.

**Breakthrough Election:** An election that serves to legitimize a regime change from autocratic, authoritarian, one-party, personal, or military rule to a constitutional government based on civilian rule and competitive elections. Also referred to as founding election or transitional election.

**Cascade Training:** A training of trainers (TOT) technique whereby a core group of trainers are given instruction and subsequently tasked with preparing and mentoring a secondary cadre of trainers. The secondary group would be responsible for directly training pollworkers or a tertiary group of trainers.

**Civic Education:** The provision of ongoing instruction on the fundamentals of democratic society such as constitutional limits on power, power vested in the people, separation of powers, checks and balances, transparency and accountability in government, genuine and periodic elections, and the respective roles of government, political and special interests, the mass media, the business and non-governmental sectors, and citizens.

**Civil Registry:** A comprehensive database that is maintained by the state and includes vital information on all citizens. Voter registries can be generated from this database.

**Consolidating Election:** Elections that serve to advance the process of democratization in a society that already has an elected government.

**Continuous Register:** A list of voters that is maintained and continually updated to include the newly eligible and those who have changed residence and to eliminate those who have died or moved away.

**Enabling Legislation:** Laws and statutes that clarify and define in detail the procedures, legal standards, and fulfillment of voting and political rights provided for under a constitution.

**Election Law Working Group:** A temporary grouping of legal experts and/or political party representatives formed either within an election commission or a parliamentary body to draft language for new legislation or develop specific proposals for modifying existing legislation on elections.

**Election Management:** The process by which the legal framework is operationalized.

**Election Observation:** A method by which the efficiency, transparency, professionalism, and integrity of campaigns and elections are judged by international organizations, independent domestic monitoring groups, and political parties.

**Equality:** The equivalent weight of one's vote in relationship to others to ensure equal representation.

**Executive Commission:** An election management body that is directly responsible for the day to day preparations for elections and which works on a full time basis.

**Fair Elections:** The existence of a level playing field for all participants in the electoral process.

**Free Elections:** The existence of circumstances that allow voters to cast their ballots secure in the knowledge that their rights of freedom of expression, association, assembly, and movement have been upheld throughout the election process and without fear of intimidation.

**Impartiality:** The independent and non-partisan administration of elections in full and consistent conformity with the law.

**International Election Commission:** An election management body in which foreign representatives are given membership or leadership to better ensure the functionality of the commission and/or the integrity of the election process.

**Judicial Remedy:** The redress of election-related grievances by a court of law.

**Legal Framework:** The legal standards, methodology, and procedures for organizing elections and fulfilling voting rights established in a country's constitution and further clarified and defined through enabling legislation.

**Mixed Election Commission:** An election management body comprised of independent and partisan members. Partisan members of the commission may either have voting rights or serve in an advisory capacity.

**Parallel Vote Tabulation:** A process whereby monitors record election results at individual polling sites and compare them with officials results. A PVT may record results from all polling sites in a country or use a random sample and statistics to project the outcome.

**Parliamentary Committee:** A permanent committee established within the parliamentary body to address issues of voting rights and political and electoral processes.

**Partisan Election Commission:** An election commission that has a representative mix of all political parties represented in parliament and/or contesting the election.

**Periodic List:** A voter registry devised anew for each election.



**Permanent Election Commission:** An election commission that operates on a continuous basis.

**Policy Making Commission:** An election commission that works on a part time basis and is responsible for setting policy for overall administration of the electoral process, writing rules and regulations, and resolving election complaints. Day to day planning and preparations for elections are carried out by a staff secretariat.

**Post-conflict Elections:** Elections that occur in the aftermath of war or civil conflict and are often part of a negotiated peace settlement.

**Procedural Election:** A routine election held in accordance with the times and processes set out in the constitution.

**Process-oriented Complaints:** Disputes arising from the campaign and election process regarding the abridgement of the voting or participatory rights of the electorate, candidates, and political parties. These stem from technical violations of the law but do not go to the results.

**Quick Count:** A parallel vote tabulation that employs random sampling and statistics to project the election outcome based on the results from a limited number of polling sites.

**Results-oriented Complaints:** Disputes that go to the heart of the outcome of elections.

**Secrecy:** The casting of ballots by each qualified voter in the privacy of a secure voting booth and in a manner that the marked ballot cannot be viewed upon being deposited in the ballot box.

**Secretariat:** The full time staff of a policy making commission that is responsible for day to day administration of the electoral process.

**Temporary or Provisional Election Commission (TEC or PEC):** An election management body that is appointed to administer a particular election and which is disbanded once election results have been finalized.

**Transparency:** The development of rules and regulations governing elections in an inclusive and open manner and the administration of elections and counting of votes and determination of results in a visible and verifiable way.

**Universal Electoral Code (UEC):** A comprehensive piece of legislation in which provisions governing all aspects of the election process, for example executive and legislative elections, national and municipal elections, constitutional and public referenda, campaign financing, political parties, mass media, voter registration, and administrative and civil procedures are packaged. Electoral codes, rather than distinct pieces of legislation are often used in civil law countries.

**Universality:** The existence of effective, impartial, and non-discriminatory registration procedures for voters and candidates.

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