

PD-ABIC-081

92011

FINAL REPORT

**EVALUATION OF THE
IMPROVED ELECTORAL ADMINISTRATION PROJECT
(Project No. 525-0317)**

Contract No. 525-0317-C-00-5004-00

Submitted to:

**USAID/Panama
Office of Democratic Initiatives**

Submitted By:

**Henry Johnson
Mila Brooks
Marta Maria Villaveces**

**Checchi and Company Consulting, Inc.
1730 Rhode Island Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036**

November 23, 1994

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	i-iii
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY	3
III. PROJECT DESCRIPTION	4
A. Setting	4
B. Goals and Objectives	5
1. Electoral Tribunal	5
2. Civic Education	6
3. Political Parties	6
C. Implementation	6
D. Summary of Major Outputs	8
E. Total Project Inputs	10
F. Related USAID/Panama and Other Donor Assistance	12
IV. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	14
A. Program Accomplishments	14
1. 1994 Elections	14
2. Electoral Tribunal	15
3. Civic Education Campaign	20
4. Political Parties	21
B. Implementation	21
C. Recommendations	22

V.	LESSONS LEARNED	24
A.	Sense of Mission and Commitment from the Outset Was of Paramount Importance	24
B.	Coordination at All Levels Was Generally Very Effective	25
C.	Building Confidence in the Electoral Tribunal and the Civil and Voter Registries Was Crucial	25
D.	Improved Information Technology Played a Key Role	26
E.	Assistance Was Professional, Competent and Timely	26
F.	Flexibility Was an Important Key to Success	27
G.	Exchanges with Electoral Tribunal Personnel from Other Countries Were Very Helpful	27

ANNEXES

- A. Sope of Work**
- B. Persons Interviewed and Institutions Contacted**
- C. List of Documents Consulted by Evaluation Team**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Improved Electoral Administration Project (525-0317) was signed by USAID/Panama in September 1992 to provide continuing institutional strengthening support to the Electoral Tribunal and to support free, fair, and open general elections in May 1994. A key overall indicator of success of the Project was to be the conduct of the 1994 general elections and acceptance of their results by the Panamanian public and international observers.

At the time the Project was signed, the Electoral Tribunal was attempting to recover from a total loss of public confidence with the annulment of the 1989 elections. Under new Magistrates after 1990, the Electoral Tribunal demonstrated progress in regaining public confidence as well as capability to carry out its functions on a limited scale in the partial elections of January 1991 and the Constitutional Referendum of 1992. But a diagnostic study completed in 1992 identified institutional constraints that would inhibit the Electoral Tribunal from effectively complying with its responsibilities during a full-scale electoral process such as the 1994 elections. To address these constraints, the Improved Electoral Administration Project provided technical and commodity assistance to the Electoral Tribunal for cleansing and updating the civil and electoral registries, for developing and installing an improved information technology system, and for supporting a civic education/voter motivation campaign.

With the approach of the Project's completion in December 1994, USAID/Panama contracted for this final evaluation to evaluate the progress achieved and identify lessons learned. A three person team spent two and a half weeks in Panama in October 1994 reviewing documents and interviewing key participants from the Electoral Tribunal, implementing organizations, USAID/Panama, and the U.S. Embassy. Two members of the team traveled to Costa Rica for two days to talk with additional participants in the project, and the third member traveled to the interior of Panama to visit Provincial Electoral Tribunal offices.

The evaluation team found that the Project was notably successful in meeting its objectives. By all possible measures, the 1994 elections were a surprising success. Former President Jimmy Carter and members of his international observer delegation called the elections the cleanest and most transparent they had witnessed in Latin America. Voter participation was high, violence was non-existent, there were no complaints of error or fraud, unofficial results were reported rapidly, and results were accepted immediately by the candidates who all conceded to the winner by early the following day.

The role played by the Electoral Tribunal was critical to this successful election and would not have been possible without Project assistance. Significant accomplishments under the Project in strengthening the Electoral Tribunal's institutional capacity included an improved information technology system, strengthening of the planning and training functions, and improved accuracy of the civil and electoral registries. A further major contribution to the successful election was

the voter motivation and education campaign. This aggressive, creative, and effectively managed campaign had a significant impact on raising voter registration and encouraging voter participation in the elections.

While significant advances were made by the Electoral Tribunal, pressures generated by the 1994 electoral process prevented further institutional improvement efforts that the Electoral Tribunal itself recognized as necessary. Now is the time to take advantage of the post-election respite to consolidate advances made and move ahead with additional efforts needed. Based on its findings, the Team suggested some specific steps including: (1) to complete and implement a reorganization plan; (2) to develop a plan for continuous updating of the civil registry; (3) to initiate legislative proposals for reforms needed in the Electoral Code; (4) to record, evaluate, and utilize experience gained in the 1994 elections; and (5) to improve coordination among regional directors at the provincial level and involve them more in planning at the national level.

Factors which contributed to the Project's accomplishments suggest some lessons learned that could usefully be taken into consideration in the design and management of future programs to improve electoral administration.

- Sense of mission and commitment from the outset was of paramount importance

The Project responded to and benefitted from an atmosphere of high commitment to holding free, fair, and open elections in 1994 that was shared by President Endara, the Electoral Tribunal Magistrates and their staff, the political parties, and the citizenry. To a considerable extent, accomplishments and success of the Project were due to this very favorable atmosphere and the ability of Project implementors to take advantage of it.

- Coordination at all levels was generally very effective

Also striking was the teamwork that prevailed throughout the electoral process. Good cooperation existed at all levels. Relations within the Electoral Tribunal, with and among the implementing organizations, and with USAID/Panama were excellent and greatly facilitated achievement of Project objectives.

- Building confidence in the Electoral Tribunal and the civil and electoral registries was crucial

Trust of the Panamanian people in the electoral registry was key to gaining trust in the Electoral Tribunal generally. But studies had shown there were many deficiencies in the electoral registry and the civil registry on which it depends. Cleansing the registries therefore became a central objective. The approach taken to seek actively to involve the citizens in the process not only got the public involved in actually helping with the cleansing process but also helped build public confidence in the resulting electoral registry. The many imaginative ways (the publicity campaign, kiosks, fairs, tee shirts, use of telephone and other bills) by which the Electoral Tribunal involved the public were a major factor in the successful election and undoubtedly could be usefully replicated elsewhere.

- Improved information technology played a key role

USAID/W/IRM contributed significantly to the information technology improvements which, in turn, led to the improvements in the civil and electoral registries, the identity card system, and the election day support systems. The USAID/W/IRM advisor was not limited to just approving the equipment to be ordered but was brought in at the planning stage and was able thereby to make a more effective contribution. The lesson suggested here is that for a project of this nature, in which information technology plays such an important role, USAID/W/IRM resources should be called upon not just for approval of the equipment list but for planning and development of the system as well.

- Assistance was professional, competent, and timely

Assistance was universally praised by everyone the evaluation team interviewed as having been competent and timely. Also, not only did the advisors bring their own expertise but they were able to respond to the receptive environment and committed Panamanians with whom they worked. They all felt part of a team effort and sought ways to coordinate their inputs for greater total impact. This sort of attitude and approach on the part of external advisors should be replicated wherever possible.

- Flexibility was an important key to success

The Project was refocused shortly after the Project was signed because the Referendum in November 1992 showed that deficiencies in the electoral registry were more serious than originally thought. No amount of planning at the Project design stage could have revealed the extent of these deficiencies. Project success was due in part to USAID/Panama and the Electoral Tribunal being prepared to be flexible in reallocating resources. USAID/Panama also demonstrated flexibility in (1) choosing for cost saving and efficiency reasons to use the Fundacion Cruzada Civilista Nacional/Centro Pro-Democracia (FCCN/CPD) mechanism for a portion of the technical assistance instead of going entirely with Centro de Asesoría y Promoción Electoral (CAPEL) as originally planned, and (2) using direct USAID/Panama rather than host country procurement to side step the conflict between the Contraloría and the Electoral Tribunal.

- Exchanges with Electoral Tribunal personnel from other countries were very helpful

CAPEL deserves credit for stimulating such exchanges. They bring peer pressure which adds to motivation. They facilitate cross fertilization of ideas. For example, Panama used to very positive effect the Cuerpo de Delegados concept developed in Costa Rica. To the extent such exchanges are among Latin Americans, i.e. South-South dialogue, as the former director of the Instituto Interamericano de Derechos Humanos (IIDH) characterized them, they have more credibility and impact than exchanges just with Northern democracies.

I. INTRODUCTION

Panama has had a torturous political history. With its independence, Panama inherited the traditional political parties of Colombia - Liberal and Conservative - which continued until the 1920s. Since that period, political parties have been largely representative of elite factions clustered around specific personalities, with coalitions combining and recombining and following little or no doctrinal basis.

The Constitution of 1946 and the Electoral Code provided for universal suffrage and the secret ballot, although actual practice was determined more by social custom than by the law. In practice, a small number of wealthy families, mostly located in Panama City, manipulated the political process, passing control of the government among themselves. They used the multiparty system as a means of regulating what, in effect, became an intramural competition. The vast majority of Panamanians did not believe that they were a part of the political system or that their vote counted.

The Panamanian Defense Forces took power through a coup in 1968 and installed General Omar Torrijos as leader. The military, with strong middle-class leadership, brought a strong populist support to the government. This was achieved in the 1970s through large increases in social programs, including expansion of education and health delivery and improved coverage by the social security system. Many poor Panamanians were brought into the political life of the country. In spite of its populist base, however, the military tolerated little political opposition. All political parties were declared illegal and elections, when they were held, were closely controlled.

With the signing of the Panama Canal Treaties in 1977, the military regime agreed to conduct political reforms by permitting elections and the return of many political leaders from exile. The process of transition toward democracy was derailed with the death of Omar Torrijos. The new military leaders became very active in political affairs in order to manipulate the political process to remain in power. Their active role became especially evident in their manipulation of the 1984 presidential election in favor of the official candidate.

This military involvement in politics weakened the political party structure, creating a vacuum in the political leadership of the country. Civic movements which consolidated into the National Civic Crusade of 1987, attempted to move into this vacuum. The military regime, in its struggle to hold on to power, organized the 1989 national elections to legitimize its rule. However, when the election results began overwhelmingly to favor the opposition, the military annulled the elections.

Against this historical backdrop, there was a sound basis for skepticism on the part of many Panamanians that free, fair, and open democratic elections could be held. Following the removal of General Noriega during Operation Just Cause and the return of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) program to Panama in 1990, the strengthening of democracy became a cornerstone of USAID/Panama's combined recovery and development program. A key

component in support of this objective was the Improved Electoral Administration Project (0317) signed in September 1992 to assist Panama in bringing about free, fair, and open general elections in 1994 and to strengthen Panama's Electoral Tribunal in the process.

With the approach of the Project's completion in December 1994, USAID/Panama has requested this end of project evaluation. The purpose and methodology of the evaluation are set out in Section II. A background description of the Project is in Section III. The evaluation team's findings and recommendations are presented in Section IV. Lessons learned are summarized in Section V.

II. PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

USAID/Panama contracted for this final evaluation of Project 0317 to measure and evaluate progress achieved. Operational components of the Project were to be examined, but a major focus of the evaluation was to identify lessons learned for similar projects that USAID may carry out in the future. The evaluation scope of work is included as Annex A.

Checchi and Company Consulting, Inc. sent a three-person team to Panama in October 1994 to carry out the evaluation. The team was led by Henry Johnson, a retired USAID senior foreign service officer with thirty years of USAID experience, mostly in Latin America, including four years as Program Officer in Panama from 1970 to 1974. As a private consultant following retirement, he has been Team Leader for several evaluations of USAID projects in Costa Rica, Bolivia, and El Salvador.

The team included Mila Brooks as a Democratic Initiatives Specialist. She has had extensive Latin American experience with staff positions in the Peace Corps, as Coordinator of Democratic Initiatives programs in USAID/Nicaragua, and as an Election Specialist in Nicaragua and El Salvador. The team also included Marta Maria Villaveces, a Colombian Electoral Specialist, who has coordinated civic education programs for the Instituto Interamericano de Derechos Humanos/Centro de Asesoría y Promoción Electoral (IIDH/CAPEL) in Costa Rica, served as an electoral consultant for the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) in the Dominican Republic, Romania, and Haiti, and was a technical electoral specialist to the Samper presidential campaign in Colombia.

Before going to Panama, two members of the team spent three days in Washington interviewing USAID/Washington and other personnel involved with the Project. The full team then spent two and one-half weeks in Panama interviewing key participants and observers of the program from the Panamanian Electoral Tribunal, implementing organizations, USAID, and the U.S. Embassy. Two members of the team traveled to Costa Rica for two days to talk with persons located there, especially with CAPEL, one of the major implementing organizations. The third team member traveled to Santiago and Penonome in Panama to visit Provincial Electoral Tribunal offices.

A list of the persons interviewed and institutions contacted is in Annex B. The team also reviewed documents and records available in USAID/Panama and the offices of Panamanian institutions visited. A bibliography of key documents is in Annex C.

III. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

A. Setting

At the time the Project was signed in September 1992, Panama had experienced more than two years of civilian democratic government. There was an emerging perception that the government could be moving toward returning power to the elite of pre-1968 days. The formerly disenfranchised class, which felt a greater sense of participation during the military regimes, was not going to be satisfied with a return to the urban-based upper middle class oligarchy. A more broadly-based political party system, increased participation, and a more equitable and responsive government were widely viewed as necessary.

As a result of Panama's experience with past elections, the electoral process was looked upon with considerable skepticism by most Panamanians at all levels of the social/economic spectrum. Most were looking to the May 1994 elections as a bellwether for the country's political future. For democracy to continue to develop in Panama, it was important for the general populace to view the electoral process leading to those elections as free, fair and open.

A critical role in the electoral process is played by the Electoral Tribunal which operates the civil and electoral registries, administers the elections, and certifies election results. The Electoral Tribunal had totally lost all public confidence with the annulment of the 1989 elections when the military saw that results were going against their candidate. Under new Magistrates after 1990, the Electoral Tribunal demonstrated in the partial elections of January 1991 and the Constitutional Referendum of 1992 a capability to carry out its functions on a limited scale. But a diagnostic study completed by CAPEL and an assessment by IFES identified a number of constraints that would inhibit the Electoral Tribunal from effectively complying with its responsibilities during a full-scale electoral process.

Chief among these constraints were:

- Deficient overall institutional capacity including inadequate training, poor organization, excessive staff, and inadequate equipment to support day-to-day operations and conduct of the general elections.
- Lack of technical and physical capacity in the Electoral Tribunal's Civil Registry, Identity Card, and Electoral Organization Divisions to carry out their assigned functions, including processing and storage of information, producing secure identity cards in timely fashion, and providing efficient logistic support for the elections.

In addition to these internal problems, the Electoral Tribunal was also constrained by:

- A poorly informed client population which did not fully understand its civic rights and responsibilities and accorded the Electoral Tribunal and the political party system low credibility.
- Political parties which did not consistently support true democratic processes and did not fully understand their roles and responsibilities in carrying out the election process.

Project 0317 was signed on September 19, 1992 to address these constraints. The Project was a continuation of USAID efforts in support of electoral reform in Panama that began in November 1990 with a grant to CAPEL to assist the Electoral Tribunal with the special elections in January 1991. Additional funding was provided for the elections needs assessment noted above and to assist with the Constitutional Referendum in November 1992. Project 0317 was intended to maintain continuing support without interruption to the Electoral Tribunal and to provide the additional resources needed to meet the challenge of the 1994 elections.

B. Goals and Objectives

The overall goals of the Project were: (1) to improve understanding of the democratic system of government in Panama; and (2) to strengthen the capacity of key Panamanian support institutions, and the public, to participate in such a system. The purpose of the Project was to support free, fair, and open general elections in May 1994.

The end of Project status was to be: 1) an improved institutional capacity in the Electoral Tribunal to manage the civil and electoral registries and to administer elections; and 2) broader public and political party knowledge of, participation in, and multi-partisan support for democratic processes. A key overall indicator of success of the Project was to be the conduct of the 1994 general elections and acceptance of their results by the Panamanian public and international observers. Specific Project objectives addressed the Electoral Tribunal, civic education, and the political parties.

1. Electoral Tribunal

Project efforts to strengthen the Electoral Tribunal were to be in two areas. The first was general improvement of the organization and involved such activities as development of the Training Office and the Planning Division, revision of staffing patterns, and installation and start-up of new data management and processing systems. The second area focused on improving the technical and physical capacities of the Electoral Tribunal's three principal line divisions (the Civil Registry, Identity Card, and Electoral Organization Divisions) to carry out their assigned tasks.

2. Civic Education

Implementation of a civic education/voter motivation campaign, conducted prior to the elections, was given high priority in CAPEL's diagnostic study. The campaign was to increase voter turnout and insure voter understanding of the mechanics of the election process.

3. Political Parties

A training program of seminars and workshops was to be held throughout the country to address the roles and responsibilities of the country's political parties in carrying out the election process. The objective was to insure that local and national leaders of the parties understand how the electoral process works and what the parties' responsibilities are to facilitate free, fair, and open elections.

C. Implementation

The Electoral Tribunal was the Project's primary counterpart institution. The Electoral Tribunal's three Magistrates were responsible for overall project administration and coordination as well as for assuring that the Project's activities were carried out by the appropriate Electoral Tribunal divisions and offices. Day-to-day Project oversight as well as liaison with USAID/Panama were the responsibility of the Director of the Electoral Tribunal's Planning Division. In addition, Project activities that were conducted in the Civil Registry, Identity Card, and Electoral Organization Divisions were coordinated with the directors of these divisions.

Specifically, the Director of Planning was responsible for:

- coordinating input of the technical assistance teams;
- scheduling and approving the in-service and new hire training programs;
- scheduling motivation campaigns and the training of election day workers;
- securing the final approval of the Electoral Tribunal prior to the procurement of commodities financed under the Project; and
- preparing quarterly work plans and semi-annual progress reports.

USAID/Panama hired a U.S. Personal Services Contractor (PSC) to manage Project 0317 for the duration of the Project. This Contractor was the first point of contact at USAID/Panama for all Government of Panama (GOP) and private implementing entities under the Project.

Technical assistance to the Electoral Tribunal was provided through CAPEL which was already assisting the Electoral Tribunal under an earlier project (AID to the Electoral Tribunal Project 525-0307-03) to plan and carry out the special election in January 1991, the Constitutional

Reform Referendum held in November 1992, and generally to improve the Electoral Tribunal's capacity to carry out further electoral processes. USAID/Panama decided not to compete the proposed cooperative agreement because CAPEL had already established a close working relationship with the Electoral Tribunal. Given the proximity of the 1994 elections no other organization could mobilize in sufficient time to prepare the Electoral Tribunal for these elections. Further, given the political sensitivities related to the electoral process, no U. S. institution could operate effectively in the Project's environment.

During the Electoral Tribunal's preparations for the November 1992 Referendum, serious deficiencies were noted in the electoral registry process. Both international observers and CAPEL recommended to Electoral Tribunal Magistrates that priority emphasis needed to be placed on cleansing and updating the electoral registry. The Magistrates agreed, and it was therefore determined that Project 0317 assistance made available through CAPEL would concentrate principally on improving the electoral registry and on the civic education and voter motivational campaigns in support of that effort.

On April 30, 1993, a Cooperative Agreement totalling \$1,755,050 was signed with CAPEL for an eighteen-month program of technical support to the Electoral Tribunal lasting through July 1994. Technical assistance activities included a civic education and voter motivation campaign; assistance in the review and revision of the Electoral Tribunal's plan for the cleansing and updating of the electoral registry; preparation, review and revision of training plans for the Electoral Tribunal's permanent and temporary electoral registry workers; two public opinion polls measuring the voters' perceptions of the success of the electoral registry process; the mounting of an International Observer Team for the May 1994 general elections; and a final Project assessment concluding activities in July 1994.

To complement and support assistance provided by CAPEL, a grant agreement for \$988,241 was signed in May 1993 with the Fundacion Cruzada Civilista Nacional/Centro Pro-Democracia (FCCN/CPD) to provide technical support to the Electoral Tribunal for fourteen months through July 1994. Specifically, this support included contracting over 200 temporary personnel to identify, verify, and input vital data for the civil and electoral registries. The majority of these short-term employees concluded their work on March 31, 1994. FCCN/CPD also contracted two long term consultants who advised on election logistics and the transmission and processing of election day voting data.

USAID/W/IRM assisted the Electoral Tribunal in planning for and utilizing Project- and GOP-financed information technology resources. USAID/Panama handled all commodity procurement for the Project directly in order to facilitate the procurement process. USAID/Panama also directly contracted for other services such as the conduct of public opinion polls, reestablishment of a communications network, development of a reorganization plan, and audit and evaluation.

By the time of the evaluation in October 1994, all assistance under the Project had been delivered with the exception of (1) a public opinion poll for a final assessment of the electoral process and lessons learned, and (2) a final input of technical assistance in developing a reorganization plan

for the Electoral Tribunal. The public opinion poll started the week of October 31, 1994, and the technical assistance input for the reorganization plan was being contracted for November/December 1994. The Final Contribution Date for the Project had been extended from September 30 to December 31, 1994 to accommodate these final contributions.

D. Summary of Major Outputs

Table 1 summarizes outputs achieved by the Project as reflected in the latest (October 1994) USAID/Panama Semi-Annual Report (SAR).

TABLE 1

Summary of Outputs

<u>Planned EOPS</u>	<u>Progress To Date</u>
1. Elections in CY 1994 carried out as prescribed in Constitution and accepted by Panama's Voters.	The electoral process officially opened November 8, 1993 and culminated in the successful general elections held May 8, 1994. The results of the elections were fully accepted by the winning candidates, by those defeated, all levels of the general populace, and members of the Endara government. A small number of protests were subsequently considered by the Electoral Magistrates, whose decisions required run-off elections in two districts to resolve one disputed legislative position, and a series of municipal council seats. The electoral process officially closed October 11, 1994.
2. Institutional capacity of the Electoral Tribunal is improved;	All preparations for the May 8 elections were completed as planned, all materials were delivered and in place for the voting process, the tabulation and reporting of voting results.

-Data management and processing systems fully operational;

The information Management Office successfully organized the collection and tabulation of the voting results. The presentation of the results at the Atlapa Convention Center was considered by all involved to have been a complete success.

-Training Office & Planning Division capable of assuming all assigned tasks;

The training of more than 42,000 election day workers was completed on time for the May 8 elections. Began in mid-March, the training was provided to members of the voting tables, inspectors, supervisors, members of the circuit, provincial and national scrutiny boards, and was made available to representatives of the political parties.

The Planning Office has demonstrated full capability in handling the election planning and logistics.

-Civil Registry is keeping its data bases current;

The Civil Registry is estimated to be 95% accurate. Equipment and personnel are in place to keep the Civil Registry up to date. Project procured equipment used for the electoral process is now being re-distributed throughout the country. Computers used for data processing of voting results are being installed in hospitals for the recording of births and deaths.

-Identity card system is providing faster service and greater security;

Approximately 450,000 applications for the issuance of new or replacement ID cards were processed. Project procured cameras and trained personnel will facilitate continuing the service following the elections. Under the new government, the issuance of ID cards has been encouraged. Previously there was an average wait of 45 days for the issuance of a new or renewed ID card. In Panama City a new or renewed card can now be obtained in less than one hour. There are similar improvements in public services in the interior.

-Improved election logistics capacity is in place;

Non-sensitive election materials were distributed in advance of the May 8 elections. Sensitive materials including ballots and tabulation were received in the final days at the provincial headquarters. There was very few incidences of lack of election day materials.

3. Knowledge and participation of Panama's population in electoral processes is increased.

The public confidence in the Electoral Tribunal increases steadily throughout the LOP. The high levels of confidence, which were significantly raised in the final months of the electoral campaign, were a direct result of Project designed and funded civic education activities as well as the level of capability that the Electoral that the Electoral Tribunal demonstrated in serving the public through the upgrading and cleansing of the electoral registry and the impartiality of decisions taken by the Magistrates. The number of Panamanians officially registered to vote in the May 8 1994 elections was 1,499,451. According to official data released by the Electoral Tribunal through the National Tabulation Board, 1,066,844 cast valid votes for a participation level of 74.6%.

4. Multi-party support for electoral process is strengthened.

Representatives of the eighteen political parties signed an Ethical Electoral Commitment formulated and sponsored by the Peace and Justice Committee, which is an influential local NGO. The Commitment was instrumental in reducing tendencies toward political violence.

E. Total Project Inputs

Table 2 details inputs from Project 0317 dollar grant financing. Figures for commitments and disbursements are drawn from USAID/Panama Controller Office reports as of 10/21/94. An additional \$285,451 was made available for commodity procurement from the Immediate

Recovery Project (525-0302). Total USAID/Panama commitments for the Project, therefore, were \$4,375,954. An uncommitted balance of \$109,197 remains from the \$4.2 million originally obligated for the Project. The disposition of this balance is currently under discussion in USAID/Panama.

TABLE 2

Project 525-0317: USAID/Panama Inputs

	<u>Committed</u>	<u>Disbursed</u>
IIDH/CAPEL Cooperative Agreement	\$1,755,050	\$1,755,050
FCCN/CDP Grant Agreement	998,241	923,864
Commodities	875,693	875,693
Other Technical Assistance		
Logistic Support	3,800	3,800
Information Management System	9,000	9,000
IRM/W Buy-in	25,303	6,495
Communications Network	35,500	35,500
Miscellaneous		
Evaluation	66,000*	0
Public Opinion Poll	20,810	0
Audit	25,000*	0
Reorganization Plan	28,646*	0
Translation Services, Invitational Travel, Rental Wireless Phones, etc.	19,114	14,709
USAID Administration	228,646	77,265
	-----	-----
Total Project 0317	4,090,803	3,801,376
From Project 0302 for commodities procurement	285,451	285,451
	-----	-----
Grand Total	\$4,376,254	\$4,086,827

*In the process of being committed

F. Related USAID/Panama and Other Donor Assistance

While Project 0317 was the centerpiece of USAID/Panama's strategy beginning in 1990 to strengthen democracy in Panama, significant other USAID resources were focused on improving the capacity of those government institutions that are paramount to a functioning democracy: the Judiciary, Public Ministry (Attorney General), Police, Legislature, and public financial institutions. Specific projects included:

- Improved Administration of Justice (\$12,000,000) - to develop a criminal justice system that is expeditious, fair, and independent of political and extra-judicial influences.
- Democratic Initiatives (\$3,003,000) - to improve the level of professionalism in journalism, promote civic education, support the Electoral Tribunal (prior to Project 0317), and strengthen the ability of the country's Legislative Assembly to carry out its role.
- Financial Management Reform (\$6,300,000) - to strengthen financial systems in the government and promote the accountability of government officials in managing public resources.
- Improved Police Services (\$53,000,000) - to reorganize the country's police force into a civilian-based institution and to improve its technical capability as well as its overall performance.

As noted earlier in this report, Project 0317 was a continuation of USAID/Panama support for electoral reform. Assistance to the Electoral Tribunal began in November 1990, with the signing of the first USAID/Panama grant to CAPEL under the Democratic Initiatives project. That grant was to assist the Electoral Tribunal with the special elections on January 27, 1991. Recognizing that the Electoral Tribunal would require additional assistance after those elections, funds were included for an election needs assessment in preparation for the May 1994 national elections. Funds were also added in anticipation of the Constitutional Referendum scheduled for November 15, 1992 and to insure continued availability of assistance without interruption to the Electoral Tribunal pending approval and initiation of Project 0317.

While USAID/Panama provided the major share of support for the Electoral Tribunal and the elections of 1994, other donor assistance included:

- \$100,000 from the European Economic Community (EEC) for implementation costs of the Electoral Tribunal's civic education campaign. Project 0317 funding developed materials and the EEC contributed the placement costs in the press and on radio and TV.

- \$50,000 from Canada's International Development Agency (CIDA) for the procurement of hand-held radios used by Electoral Tribunal personnel and the 280 members of the *Cuerpos Delegados* (apolitical local and national leaders who acted as non-official representatives of the Electoral Tribunal during the campaign and on election day; while they had no official duties, they could report problems to the Electoral Tribunal and brought a valuable moral presence to the process).
- \$50,000 from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) to assist in development of the Electoral Tribunal's "re-engineering" (reorganization) plan.

IV. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Program Accomplishments

Project 0317 was notably successful in meeting its objectives. The key indicator of its success was to be the conduct of the 1994 general elections and acceptance of the results by the Panamanian people and international observers. Exceeding most expectations, the elections proved to be almost a model of how elections can be conducted.

Former President Carter and members of his delegation stated that "these were the cleanest and most transparent elections" they had witnessed in Latin America. Ricardo Arias Calderon, a respected Panamanian political figure, said that the elections "were the most free and fair in Panama's history." While there were many reasons the elections went so well, members of the Electoral Tribunal from the Magistrates on down all agree that USAID/Panama's technical and material assistance played a critical role.

The team's findings regarding measures of success and factors contributing to or inhibiting achievement of Project objectives are discussed below.

1. 1994 Elections

By all possible measures, the 1994 elections were a surprising success. Despite expectations of violence, there was absolutely none on election day. The fact that by 10:00 a.m. families were in the streets was a clear sign that the elections would go well.

Voter participation reached 73%. There was an insignificant level of error in the electoral registry. There was less than one percent discrepancy with the quick count carried out by the *Comision de Paz y Justicia* that covered 80% of the polling places. Unofficial results began being reported within three hours after the closing of the polls. (Before 1991 the results were not reported until days later.) Results were accepted immediately by the candidates who all conceded to the winner by early the following day. There were no complaints of fraud from the political parties or the public.

A major factor contributing to the success of these elections was the will and commitment on everyone's part to have a clean election, and thereby to show that Panama wanted to move forward and not return to the past. The Endara Administration saw the elections and the peaceful transfer of power to be its major legacy. Former Ambassador Dean Hinton reported to the team that President Endara assigned top priority to clean elections and showed by his actions that he meant it. Other priorities of the Endara Administration slipped but not the goal of well-administered, clean elections.

The Electoral Tribunal, for its part, was anxious to revise its image from the 1989 elections and, with a new leadership team, became strongly committed to making every effort for the elections to succeed. The political parties signed a pact to establish rules of the game for the campaign and

the elections. The Comision de Justicia y Paz met regularly with the parties to maintain this pact and to help the parties work together to solve problems before they became major issues.

The general public showed by its response to the registration campaign and participation on election day that they were also committed to a successful election. The fact that the opposition won, and won by more than a small margin, was also helpful in assuring public acceptance of the results and faith in the process.

The role played by the Electoral Tribunal was a key factor. The Electoral Tribunal would not have been able to do what it did without the assistance provided through this Project. Details regarding accomplishments of this assistance in strengthening the Electoral Tribunal's institutional capacity, making available equipment and materials on a timely basis, and supporting a civic education campaign are discussed below.

2. Electoral Tribunal

a. General Organizational Improvement

Organizational Restructuring

The Electoral Tribunal and USAID/Panama recognized in 1990 that a general restructuring and reorganization of the institution was essential. Shortly after taking office, the three governing magistrates of the Electoral Tribunal submitted a reorganization plan to the GOP that would have reduced personnel and reordered staffing patterns. The plan was based on a brief assessment carried out by CAPEL. Portions of the plan, however, were rejected by the Ministries of Planning and Finance, which requested additional study and further refinement.

To encourage continuing efforts in this area, USAID/Panama included in the Project Agreement signed September 10, 1992 a condition precedent calling for development of a final reorganization plan and its approval by the GOP within eight months. Budget constraints encountered by the Electoral Tribunal and preparations for the 1994 elections, however, intervened and prevented development of a full reorganization plan. USAID/Panama agreed to several extensions of the deadline for meeting the condition. In August 1993, the Electoral Tribunal presented documentation to USAID/Panama in an effort to satisfy the condition. The Mission did not find that this documentation met the requirements. But the Mission did decide to convert the condition to a covenant.

Nevertheless, various ad-hoc reorganizations have taken place throughout the Electoral Tribunal since September 1992 in response to demands for specific institutional improvements. These have included reorganization of the Division of Information in response to the operational needs of its new information management systems and to the request of the office of the Contraloria General. This and other ad-hoc reorganizations occurred also at the provincial level. The Planning Division at the national level was reorganized to take on greater responsibility for providing planning and logistic support for the 1994 elections, the Public Relations office was upgraded to handle the

increased work caused by those elections, and the Training Office was provided with a clearer mandate.

CAPEL and the Electoral Tribunal held a series of three management workshops in early 1994 which looked at the Electoral Tribunal's organization and the Electoral Tribunal started negotiations with the University of Panama to carry out an organizational assessment. Following the general elections, the Electoral Tribunal held a series of self-evaluation conferences. During these meetings, the strengths and weaknesses of the electoral process as well as of the institution itself were discussed. The Electoral Tribunal did not spare itself in self-criticism. Both magistrates and staff accepted that while the elections were successful, institutionalization of the various processes had not fully come about.

Management was criticized for making decisions without sufficient information and often not making their decisions known to the lower levels. Mechanisms for coordination and cooperation were not in place. No strategic institutional plan was established. Weaknesses of each division were spelled out.

From these meetings came a preliminary plan for the strategic development of the Electoral Tribunal. USAID/Panama has arranged for a consultant to assist the Electoral Tribunal with this plan. It is expected that a final reorganization plan will be developed by December 15, 1994. The plan will then be presented for discussion and further revision to Electoral Tribunal officials, USAID/Panama representatives, and invited members of other Central American electoral offices and related institutions.

Preparation and implementation of this reorganization plan remain major items of unfinished business as the Project nears completion. While USAID/Panama was justified in not insisting on completion of the plan while the Electoral Tribunal was overwhelmed with the 1994 electoral process, it is important that the Electoral Tribunal take advantage of this respite, after the 1994 elections and before a new electoral process begins, to put its house in order. Most observers and the Electoral Tribunal itself agree that changes are needed and that now is the time to move ahead with them.

Management Information and Data Processing

With technical and commodity assistance provided through the Project, an improved information technology was developed for the Electoral Tribunal which led to improvements in the civil registry, the electoral registry, the identity card system, and the elections support systems (data capturing, transmission, consolidation, and reporting; communication of election results to the press; candidates' inscription; electoral information systems; voting centers' data; and party registration). All the new information technology systems had contingency plans and back-up systems in the event of failure of the primary system. These back-up systems proved to be vital in responding to emergencies which came about during the reporting of election results.

With data processing equipment funded and procured by the Project, the following was accomplished:

- IBM, up-graded NCR, and other computers replaced the Electoral Tribunal's obsolete and inadequate NCR 9800 system;
- the computer center was upgraded and central terminals were replaced with personal computers;
- the Civil Registry building's communication system was wired;
- microcomputers, peripherals (printers), and telecommunications systems for access to and storage of data were designed and implemented;
- centers for collection and transmission of final election results were connected with provincial electoral offices, the Civil Register's computer center, and the Atlapa Convention Center, where elections results were announced to the media and the public.
- elections support systems were established for data capturing, transmission, consolidation and reporting.

The information technology installed as a result of this Project was another factor in the success of the elections. In the future, the Electoral Tribunal should press for legislation to minimize the need for "manual" procedures - which was where the most errors occurred. Simulations and rehearsals in using the various information technology systems are essential and should be designed and evaluated by personnel not responsible for system implementation. Training for specific procedures where most problems occurred should be evaluated and redesigned as needed.

In addition, a cut-off date for systems modifications or enhancements should be established and enforced. The implementation team should not be experimenting with enhancements in the six-week period prior to the elections. Sufficient time should be allowed to test the system fully before it is put into use.

Planning and Training Divisions

The Electoral Tribunal's Planning Division was responsible for planning all activities relating to the electoral process. The Planning Director was also responsible for Project oversight and liaison with USAID/Panama. This involved coordinating the work of technical assistance teams and preparing quarterly work plans and semi-annual progress reports.

With assistance from CAPEL and other technicians, Planning Division personnel identified some 600 activities which were part of the electoral process and grouped them into a total of 29 programs. A time line was established for each process within the programs and a strategic plan

was developed for coordinating the work of the functional units charged with implementation. One person was made responsible for each process and conducted weekly meetings to review progress and problems. This strengthening of the planning process within the Electoral Tribunal was an important achievement of the Project and contributed to the effective electoral process.

Also with assistance from CAPEL, the Planning Division scheduled in-service, new hire, and election day workers training programs. While the Project Agreement called for the Planning Division to monitor all elections-related legislation, no legislation relating to elections was enacted during the Project period.

The Training Division orients Electoral Tribunal employees and trains the trainers of election day workers (approximately 50,000) who are responsible for the voting tables, vote tabulation, scrutinizing the vote count, and collection and transmission of data. The Division also offers training to political party members who observe the voting tables and tabulation of ballots.

The Division was responsible for a program to instruct voters in the use of the papeleta unica, the new ballot which would be used for the first time in the 1994 elections. Modernoble-Mega prepared media spots under the Project which appeared in the media with combined Project and EEC funding. Videos explaining the papeleta unica and voting procedures were distributed to government offices and public enterprises. In addition, Training Office personnel organized presentations and demonstrations on proper election day procedures. These were made available wherever large numbers of voters could be found (banks, Embassies, the National University, etc.). Voting day simulations were conducted to provide additional instruction on voting procedures and to encourage voter participation.

b. Line Division Strengthening

The Civil Registry Division maintains records on the civil status of all Panamanians. Before the Constitutional Referendum, IFES and CAPEL found that both the civil and voter registries were deficient. With respect to the civil registry, records of births, deaths, marriages, and divorces were found in drawers and on desks of former officials. The electoral registry listed citizens in districts different from where they had previously voted, omitted the names of many who were registered, and contained the names of many who were dead.

To address these problems, USAID/Panama:

- Contracted through CAPEL with Modernoble-Mega to conduct a nation-wide publicity campaign to promote citizen responsibility and participation in the registration and verification process of the electoral registry, with CAPEL providing technical assistance.
- Contracted with the FCCN/CPD to provide field personnel to cleanse, update, and input data for the civil and electoral registries; to complement Modernoble-Mega in the publicity campaign; and to handle the Electoral Tribunal's telephone bank.

- Provided information technology for cleansing and updating the civil and electoral registries and for protection against fraudulent entry or use of data. The system for electronic transmission of data between the national office and offices in the provinces was strengthened.
- Provided information technology and computers and other data processing equipment which were used for tabulation and transmission of elections results. Some of this equipment has been placed in hospitals to record births and deaths. Data collected will go directly into the civil registry and will assist the registry in keeping its records current.

As a result of these efforts, CAPEL polls reported in March 1994 that both the civil and electoral registries were 92% correct. Improved accuracy of the registries was confirmed by the fact that no complaints were made about their validity on election day or afterward.

While improvements were made in the civil registry, they were partial and incomplete. As a matter of high priority for the Electoral Tribunal, on-going efforts are needed to improve the accuracy of the civil registry and keep it current.

The Identity Card Division issues the Identity Card (*cedula*) which proves Panamanian citizenship, is used for all official transactions, and serves as the voting card. Citizens must obtain a *cedula* from the Identity Card Division upon reaching the age of 18. The division renews *cedulas* every twelve years and prepares duplicate cards in the event of loss or deterioration. During the recent elections, the Division issued some 450,000 identity cards.

Prior to the Project, a citizen had to wait for a month or more to receive a *cedula*. *Cedulas* are now prepared and issued in 30 to 60 minutes. CAPEL assisted in development of the present system which has become institutionalized. The Project also provided computers, office equipment, Polaroid cameras, plastic laminate, and Polaroid film. Other Project-procured equipment used by the Training Division, such as TVs and VCRs, is being transferred for use by the Identification Card Division.

The Electoral Organization Division maintains the electoral registry which contains the name, address, birth date, and *cedula* number of every registered voter. The Division is responsible for the coordination of all processes necessary for conducting elections, inscribing political parties and de-certifying them when they no longer meet legal requirements, and providing security for all electoral documentation.

With assistance provided under the Project, improvements were made in these processes. The Division was responsible for carrying out the strategic plan for the elections prepared by the Planning Division as noted above. All the improved information and data systems and improvements in the electoral registry, also noted above, were necessary support to this Division in carrying out the elections.

3. Civic Education Campaign

A voter motivation and education campaign carried out between June 7, 1993 and May 7, 1994 was a major contributor to Project success. The media campaign was conducted by the Modernoble-Mega advertising agency with technical assistance from CAPEL. The Electoral Tribunal, CAPEL, the USAID/Panama Project Officer, and the FCCN/CPD task force all participated together with Modernoble-Mega in some part of the campaign's design and implementation.

Prior to designing the campaign, focus groups were used to determine the public's views and level of confidence in the Electoral Tribunal. Results confirmed a lack of trust in the electoral registry. Based on these results, CAPEL and Modernoble-Mega defined a campaign which would (1) motivate citizens to check their registration before the closing of the registration period, and (2) instruct voters in the use of the papeleta unica.

The first phase of the campaign centered on "Verificate," exhorting citizens to verify their voter registration, change their addresses if necessary, make other needed corrections, and remove the dead from the rolls. Those who were eighteen years old or due to become so within the year were encouraged to register.

Spots featuring non-professional locals were developed for radio, television, and movie theaters. Lyrics, music, and costuming for these spots were adapted to the various ethnic groups and localities. School children and adults quickly picked up the catchy tunes and sang them in the streets.

During the first 90 days of the campaign, radio spots were run 13,467 times on 51 stations, videos were shown 597 times on five television channels, and advertisements appeared a total of 489 times in nine daily and weekly newspapers. In addition, 325,000 decals, 42,000 flyers, 7,000 posters, 4,200 tee shirts, and 1,000 caps were produced and distributed. This level of saturation continued throughout the campaign.

Both private and public businesses were enlisted to assist in the campaign. Utility companies, banks, and private firms included clients' voter identity numbers, polling place locations, and motivational messages in their mailings. Beer trucks and public buses carried large promotional billboards.

Members of the FCCN/CPD task force were everywhere. They went door-to-door reviewing lists with eligible voters. They set up booths and kiosks at provincial fairs, universities, shopping centers, banks on paydays - anywhere where congregations of voting age population could be found. They carried portable computers which allowed immediate input of corrections in the data. Using Project-supplied wireless telephones and radios, FCCN/CPD workers called the Electoral Tribunal's information management division when voters' records were not found in the portable computers. An average of 2500 calls were made each week.

USAID/Panama allotted \$1,000,000 to this civic education campaign. Approximately \$100,000 was used in the design of the program, with the remaining \$900,000 going to production of materials, newspaper advertisements, and television and radio time. By February 1994, USAID/Panama funding was exhausted and the European Economic Community picked up the costs of continuing the media campaign up to election day.

By the end of the civic education campaign, CAPEL polls indicated that 886,880 Panamanians (62% of the voting population) had inquired about their registration data. Other polls conducted shortly before the elections indicated that 92% of the voting populace knew the location of their voting place. The Latin American Consulting Group (LATCO), funded through CAPEL's Cooperative Agreement, noted that such a high percentage was unusual in Latin America and conducted its own investigation to determine if this figure was accurate and if the education campaign had played a significant role. LATCO confirmed that the figure was accurate and had indeed come about as a result of the publicity campaign. Clearly this aggressive, creative, and effectively managed campaign had a major impact on voters' registration and eventual participation in the elections.

4. Political Parties

The original Project design included political parties as a target group and called for \$100,000 to be used for seminars and training on the roles and responsibilities of political parties in the electoral process. It was decided for policy reasons not to use these funds for this purpose and they were reprogrammed for other uses within the Project.

U.S. policy was to keep a low profile and a meticulously neutral stance toward the elections. Anything done in connection with one party had to be done equally with all. Because there were so many parties, it would have been impractical to have tried to provide the sort of training and assistance that the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, for example, was providing to the Christian Democrats. In any event, support was forthcoming from other external sources, including the U.S. National Endowment for Democracy.

B. Implementation

CAPEL was appropriately chosen as the principal implementing agent under the Project because it had already been assisting the Electoral Tribunal under pre-Project activities and had gained Electoral Tribunal confidence and trust. Also, CAPEL had familiarity with the Electoral Tribunal and had established working relationships with its staff.

Initially, there were some differences of view between the Electoral Tribunal and CAPEL on CAPEL's role. CAPEL felt it should have some participation in policy making while the Electoral Tribunal believed CAPEL should be restricted purely to a technical assistance role. These differences in perceptions were discussed and resolved in meetings with USAID/Panama in February 1993. CAPEL's performance has been effective and fully satisfactory to the Electoral Tribunal and USAID/Panama.

While CAPEL was initially foreseen in the Project Paper as the channel for all technical assistance, USAID/Panama and the Electoral Tribunal decided during the course of the Project to use a local PVO (FCCN/CPD) as a mechanism for contracting the over 200 temporary personnel working with the civil and electoral registries and contracting the elections logistics and data processing advisors. This was a less expensive and more efficient approach than if CAPEL had attempted to establish a local office for these purposes. FCCN/CPD was able to coordinate more efficiently with the Ministry of Labor in meeting the necessary requirements for contracting the temporary personnel. Also, the FCCN/CDP mechanism permitted the Electoral Tribunal to use advisors they had already identified outside CAPEL for elections logistics and data processing. Despite urgent time pressures, FCCN/CDP responded fully to all the requirements of its grant agreement with USAID/Panama.

Assistance provided by the elections logistics, data processing, and USAID/W/IRM advisors was praised by the Electoral Tribunal as being professionally competent and responsive to Electoral Tribunal needs. All three advisors were quickly incorporated by the Electoral Tribunal as key members of the team preparing for the elections. Advice in the areas of competence but outside the specific scopes of work of these advisors was frequently sought by the magistrates.

The personal services contractor who USAID/Panama hired as Project Officer was able to provide full-time attention to Project management which contributed to the Project's smooth implementation. He was extremely effective in establishing close working relations at all levels in the Electoral Tribunal.

C. Recommendations

Significant advances were made as noted above in strengthening the Electoral Tribunal as an institution, especially in terms of preparing for and carrying out the 1994 elections. But pressures generated by the electoral process prevented the Electoral Tribunal from pursuing institutional strengthening efforts it recognized as necessary. Final preparation and implementation of a reorganization plan, for example, was postponed until after the elections.

Now is the time to take advantage of the post-elections respite to consolidate advances made and move ahead with further strengthening efforts. Based on its findings during the course of this evaluation, the evaluation team suggests the following specific steps:

- Complete development of a final reorganization plan, with assistance of the final consultant to be provided by USAID/Panama, and prepare and initiate a plan for implementation. This reorganization plan should include among others the steps that follow.
- Develop a plan for continuous up-dating of the civil registry so that the electoral registry can be drawn directly from it and does not require separate verification. (Most observers point to continuing weaknesses of the civil registry as requiring perhaps the highest priority attention of the Electoral Tribunal.)

- **Define and initiate legislative proposals for reforms needed in the Electoral Code including, for example, measures to minimize the need for manual procedures.**
- **Collect and integrate a record of the activities, systems, and procedures used in the 1994 elections.**
- **Evaluate this experience and determine what further changes are needed.**
- **Develop goals, objectives, strategies, and specific programs for changes needed.**
- **Determine human resource requirements.**
- **Develop manuals of functions and procedures.**
- **Make special efforts to involve regional directors of the Electoral Tribunal in all of the above steps.**
- **Improve coordination among the regional directors in each province for the Civil Registry, Identity Card, and Electoral Organization Divisions.**

V. LESSONS LEARNED

Factors contributing to the accomplishments and successes noted above suggest some lessons learned that could usefully be taken into consideration in the design and management of future programs to improve electoral administration.

A. Sense of Mission and Commitment from the Outset Was of Paramount Importance

One of the most striking factors that led to the successful 1994 elections was the strong commitment that motivated everyone involved in the process. There was an almost mystical feeling about being part of an historical event.

President Endara assigned top priority to bringing about a clean election and consistently followed through with his commitment to that objective. The three Magistrates appointed to rebuild confidence in the Electoral Tribunal, after confidence had fallen to rock bottom in the 1989 elections, were young, dedicated, and hard-working. Although they had no previous experience or expertise with electoral processes, they had impressive leadership qualities. They were very effective in conveying a sense of mission to Electoral Tribunal staff that inspired extra efforts at all levels in the organization. Goals and objectives were clear to all and the Magistrates were conscientious about follow-up with Electoral Tribunal staff in tracking progress.

This spirit of commitment extended to the external advisors whose efforts frequently went beyond their scopes of work under the Project. The information management expert also assisted with design of the ballot and review of civic education and training materials. The elections logistics expert coordinated logistics with information management and assisted with development of the system for gathering voting data. Modernoble-Mega assisted in (1) making the tabulation form (*acta*) more functional and simple, (2) designing the new unified ballot (*papeleta unica*), and (3) simplifying instructions to election workers at the polling places - all outside its basic contract and therefore free of charge to the Electoral Tribunal.

The USAID/W/IRM advisor became involved in much more than just approving procurement of the information data system equipment. He became very involved with ways in which this equipment could be better used. He gained full confidence of the Magistrates to the extent that they sought his advice on information management questions completely outside the Project. He also played a helpful role in smoothing relations between the *Contraloria* and the Electoral Tribunal.

Encouraged by the Catholic Church, the political parties signed the good conduct pact and periodically convened in solemn ceremonies to reconfirm it. The Church played an active role through the *Comision de Paz y Justicia* in working with the parties to prevent issues from undermining the electoral process, and to mobilize Church infrastructure and volunteers to conduct the quick count and exit polls on election day.

Panamanian citizens in general wanted the process to work. They were stimulated by the civic education campaign and other Electoral Tribunal efforts to facilitate their participation. Their response on election day was proof of the effectiveness of these efforts.

The Project clearly benefitted from this environment of strong commitment.

B. Coordination at All Levels Was Generally Very Effective

Striking also was the teamwork that prevailed throughout the electoral process. With commitment to and understanding of the overall goal, all parties for the most part were willing to try to work together.

A notable exception was the on-going difficulties between the Contraloria and the Electoral Tribunal which were in part largely due to personality conflicts. While the two organizations were in agreement on the overall goal of the elections, they were not always in agreement on how to get there. The Contraloria-Tribunal conflict was a continuing problem through the life of the Project. But there was no serious negative impact in terms of Project objectives or the conduct of the elections.

Otherwise good cooperation existed at all levels. The Electoral Tribunal and the Comision de Paz y Justicia worked very closely together. Within the Electoral Tribunal the Magistrates worked as a team and stimulated teamwork throughout the organization. Implementing organizations and advisors under the Project all went out of their way to coordinate even though they were working in different areas and coordination was not in their specific scopes of work. Relations among the Electoral Tribunal, USAID/Panama, and implementors were all excellent and greatly facilitated achievement of Project objectives.

C. Building Confidence in the Electoral Tribunal and the Civil and Voter Registries Was Crucial

Various studies and polls confirmed that the Panamanian people had no faith in the electoral registry because they knew it had been manipulated in elections prior to 1991. Trust in the electoral registry was key to gaining trust in the Electoral Tribunal generally. Studies had also shown that there were many deficiencies and inaccuracies in the electoral registry as well as in the civil registry on which it depends.

Cleansing and updating the electoral and civil registries therefore became a central objective of the Electoral Tribunal and the principal focus of the Project. But it was also recognized that technical progress in improving the registries alone might not be sufficient to gain public confidence. Also, the time available prior to the 1994 elections was limited for the Electoral Tribunal to make technical improvements by itself in these registries.

The approach taken by the Electoral Tribunal under the Project was to seek actively to involve the citizens in the process. By conveying the message that it was each citizen's responsibility to insure proper and accurate registration, the Electoral Tribunal got the public to help with the updating and cleansing process. Public participation in this process also helped to build public confidence in the resulting electoral registry list. The many imaginative ways (the publicity campaign, kiosks, fairs, tee shirts, use of telephone and other bills) by which the Electoral Tribunal involved the public were a major factor in the successful election and undoubtedly could be usefully replicated elsewhere.

D. Improved Information Technology Played a Key Role

Technical and commodity assistance provided under the Project played an indispensable role in the information technology improvements which, in turn, led to the improvements in the civil and electoral registries, the identity card system, and the election day support systems. USAID/W/IRM contributed significantly to the technical assistance. The role of the USAID/W/IRM advisor was not limited to approval of the equipment to be ordered. Rather the advisor was brought in at the planning stage and was able thereby to make a more effective contribution. The lesson suggested here is that for a project of this nature in which information technology plays such an important role, USAID/W/IRM resources should be called upon not just for approval of the equipment list but for planning and development of the system as well.

E. Assistance Was Professional, Competent and Timely

Project success was also due to the professional and competent technical assistance provided. The technical assistance was universally praised by everyone the evaluation team interviewed. Not only did the advisors bring their own expertise but they were able to respond to the receptive environment and committed Panamanians with whom they worked. As already noted, they all felt part of a team effort and sought ways to coordinate their inputs for greater total impact. This sort of attitude and approach on the part of external advisors should be replicated wherever possible.

Assistance was also timely, which was of course critical in a project of this nature. The deadline for the elections was rigid and allowed no room for slippage or flexibility. Planning and scheduling inputs and sticking to those schedules were absolute necessities. There were no significant failures in meeting deadlines under this Project.

Also important is continuity of assistance. In the case of this Project, it followed earlier efforts to assist the Electoral Tribunal. The Project was designed in such a way that there was a smooth transition from one source of funding to the other with no interruption in ongoing activities. As one observer pointed out: "Assistance should not just be provided in response to an emergency."

F. Flexibility Was an Important Key to Success

Shortly after the Project was signed, the Referendum in November 1992 showed that deficiencies in the electoral registry were more serious than originally thought when the Project was signed. USAID/Panama readily agreed with the Electoral Tribunal to shift more emphasis under the Project to updating and cleansing the electoral registry. Resources originally designated for general institutional strengthening of the Electoral Tribunal were reduced. This refocus was an important step in helping to achieve the successful 1994 elections.

No amount of planning at the Project design stage could have revealed the extent of deficiencies in the electoral registry in the way that experience with the Referendum did. Project success was due in part to USAID/Panama and the Electoral Tribunal being prepared to be flexible in reallocating resources after the Project had been designed and initiated. USAID/Panama also demonstrated flexibility in (1) choosing for cost saving and efficiency reasons to use the FCCN/CDP mechanism for a portion of the technical assistance instead of going entirely with CAPEL as originally planned, and (2) using USAID direct rather than host country procurement to side step the conflict between the *Contraloria* and the Electoral Tribunal.

G. Exchanges with Electoral Tribunal Personnel from Other Countries Were Very Helpful

CAPEL deserves credit for stimulating such exchanges. They bring peer pressure which adds to motivation. They facilitate cross fertilization of ideas. For example, Panama used to very positive effect the *Cuerpo de Delegados* concept developed in Costa Rica. To the extent such exchanges are among Latin Americans, i.e. South-South dialogue, as the former director of IIDH characterized them, they have more credibility and impact than exchanges just with Northern democracies.

Annex A

SCOPE OF WORK

ANNEX A: SCOPE OF WORK

Project: Improved Electoral Administration Project (525-0317)
Project Assistance Completion Date (PACD): 12/31/94
Project Authorization Date: 09/08/92
Amount Authorized: \$4,200,000
Amount Obligated: \$4,200,000

Additional Amounts Obligated: \$292,870 - Immediate Recovery Project
(525-0302)

II. Background:

USAID/Panama has continuously provided assistance to the Electoral Tribunal since October 1990, beginning with a technical support grant through IIDH/CAPEL and minimal commodity procurement under the Election Assistance Project (525-0307). That support was intended to assist the Electoral Tribunal in preparations for the Partial Election of January 1991, and the Constitutional Reform Referendum of November 1992. The Improved Electoral Administration Project (525-0317) was signed on September 8, 1992, with the Ministry of Planning and Economic Policy and the Electoral Tribunal of the Government of Panama. The primary purpose of this Project is the implementation of free, fair and open national elections on May 8, 1994. Project resources have been utilized to provide technical assistance, civic education activities, commodities, and administrative support to achieve this purpose.

III. Purpose of the Evaluation:

The purpose of the evaluation is to measure and evaluate the progress achieved under the Improved Electoral Administration Project in comparison to its planned goals and objectives. While operational components of the Project should be examined, because of the short duration of the Project a major focus of the evaluation will be on identifying/describing lessons learned which should be applied to similar projects that may be carried out by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in the future.

IV. Scope of Work/Methodology:

The evaluation team will spend up to 19 days in Panama gathering data, conducting interviews and developing an initial set of findings, conclusions and recommendations. In carrying out its task the team will: (a) examine available progress reports, contracts, contract reports, other relevant project documentation

including media reports, polls of the electorate and trip reports; and (b) conduct interviews with principal players involved with Project implementation including the USAID Project Officer and Project Manager as well as officials in charge of the Electoral Tribunal, USAID/Panama, Instituto Interamericano de Derechos Humanos/Centro de Asesoría y Promoción Electoral (IIDH/CAPEL), Fundación Cruzada Civilista Nacional/Centro Pro-Democracia (FCCN/CPD). In addition, the team may utilize any other evaluation techniques deemed appropriate for completing the evaluation subject to the advance concurrence of USAID/Panama.

The team may spend up to three additional days in USAID/W examining relevant documentation and interviewing USAID personal who were involved with the Project such as the Deputy Director of the AID/W/LAC/DI Office who is the former Chief of the Office of Democratic Initiatives, USAID/Panama. In addition, as part of the 19-day Panama allotment, two members of the team will spend up to three days to visit the IIDH/CAPEL headquarters in San Jose, Costa Rica. Other visits will be made to Provincial and or Regional Electoral Tribunal offices to assess the effects of the technical assistance, the civic education campaigns and the commodity procurement. Visits to those offices will be made in consultation with the Project Manager and Electoral Tribunal officials.

The team will assess the performance of all the Project's implementing agents listed above as well as locally provided staff/technical support in meeting the goals and objectives of the twenty eight (28) month grant. Emphasis will be placed on: (a) examining the quality and appropriateness of the technical assistance provided by 1) IIDH/CAPEL and 2) FCCN/CPD; (b) reviewing the manner in which the Electoral Tribunal utilized the Technical Assistance made available through two separate sub-grants; (c) examining and documenting the Tribunal's progress in improving its long-range strategic planning activities; (d) documenting and measuring the impact of Project supplied technical assistance and commodities on the entire electoral process in preparation for the May 8, 1994 elections; (e) documenting and measuring the same in connection with the actual conduct of the elections; (f) measuring improvements in the capacity of the Electoral Tribunal to carry out its institutional responsibilities in support of the Electoral Division, the Civil Registry, the Electoral Registries, and the Identification Card Division; and (g) comparing progress/achievements of the Project, in general, and the Electoral Tribunal, in particular, against the planned objectives listed at the Output, Purpose and Goal levels in the log frame of the project paper.

The team will perform the evaluation in accordance with USAID Handbook 3 and Evaluation Handbook guidelines. Specific points that should be addressed in the evaluation include but are not limited to the following:

1. Project Impact:

a. What, if any, impact has the Project had on the voter confidence in the country's election process?

b. Did voters understand/appreciate the limitations of a democracy as well as know their rights and responsibilities within one?

c. Did voters clearly understand the voting and election processes. Did a sufficient number of voters understand how to use the "papeleta única" (individual ballots) for the May 8 elections?

d. What impact has the Project had on the operations of the Tribunal? What changes in Tribunal operations have occurred as a result of the Project? What has been the effect of these changes? Are these changes expected to remain in place over the long term?

2. Project Implementation:

Was the Project implemented in timely fashion? If not, what could have been done to speed things up? What, if any, modifications could have been made to the design of the Project in order to facilitate implementation?

3. Inputs:

a. Was the mix and amounts of commodities and technical assistance appropriate to meet project needs? If not, what adjustments should be made for future projects?

b. Were the inputs managed effectively and provided in timely fashion?

c. Was the quality of the inputs viewed as acceptable? Could improvements have been made? If so, where should they have been made?

d. Were the inputs cost effective? What steps, if any, could have been taken to reduce costs?

4. Factors Contributing to Success or Failure:

a. What are the key factors that contributed to the successes/failures of the Project?

b. Assuming the Project is successful, can it be used as a model for replication in other countries? What modifications/adjustments may be recommended to improve the model?

Prior to commencement of the field work, the team will consult with the USAID/Project Manager in Panama to obtain background

information, review files, develop and further refine the issues to be examined (as described above in this Section), and identify the key individuals to be interviewed. Timing and sequence of data gathering activities will be left to the discretion of the team, subject to budgetary and time constraints. Scheduling of appointments and interviews as well as making travel arrangements will be the responsibility of the team although USAID/Panama will assist to the extent its limited resources permit. Data analysis and writing should be coordinated with USAID/Panama on an on-going basis.

V. Team Composition, Qualifications:

The scope of work for this evaluation requires an interdisciplinary team of three professionals with the combination of skills described below.

- thorough knowledge of Latin American and preferably Panamanian social and political culture gained through living and working in the region

- demonstrated effective analytical and writing skills

- background and experience in organizational development, political analysis, financial and operational systems

- training and/or experience in promoting democratic initiatives and implementing civic education programs including development of motivational campaigns, instructional practices, etc.

- familiarity with USAID programs, policies and procedures, and experience in the evaluation of A.I.D. projects

- experience in evaluating procurement under USAID guidelines.

Ideally, the team should be composed of both U.S. and Latin American members. All team members must be fluent in Spanish and English. One of the team members will be designated as team leader who will be responsible for coordinating data gathering activities, supervising preparation of the initial report and drafting the final report.

VI. Reporting Requirements

At least four days prior to departure from Panama the team will submit a draft report of the evaluation findings to USAID/Panama for its review and comment. In conjunction with submission of the report the team will present a debriefing to USAID/Panama and, if requested, to Electoral Tribunal officials. The final report is to be submitted to USAID/Panama no later than three weeks after the team's departure from post.

The Contractor will provide 10 copies of the report, in English. The report shall be organized as follows: Executive Summary, Table of Contents, Body of the Report, and Appendices. In addition, the evaluation team will complete Sections H (abstract) and J (summary) of the USAID Evaluation Summary, form 1330-5. Section J (summary) may also serve as the Executive Summary.

The executive summary states the purpose of the evaluation, study method, principal findings, conclusion and recommendations, and lessons learned about the design and implementation of the activity.

The body of the report will describe the program being evaluated, the political, social and professional context of the project, the objectives of the evaluation; evaluations findings and conclusions drawn; and recommendations for future actions both in Panama and in other similar circumstances.

The appendices should include a copy of the evaluation scope of work, study questions, a list of documents consulted and individuals and institutions contacted.

Annex B

PERSONS INTERVIEWED AND INSTITUTIONS CONTACTED

ANNEX B: PERSONS INTERVIEWED AND INSTITUTIONS CONTACTED

US Embassy, Panama:

Mr. O.P. Garza, Chargé d'Affaires, a.i.
Ms. Carol Van Voorst, Political Officer
Mr. W. Scott Reid, Political Officer

USAID/Panama 0317 Project Committee and Other Mission Staff:

Mr. David Mutchler, Mission Director
Mr. Roger Yochelson, Chief/Office of Democratic Initiatives
Mr. Robert Murphy, Project Officer
Mr. Robert Mathia, Chief/PPEP
Mr. Joslyn Fearon, PPEP
Ms. Guadalupe Saavedra, Project Financial Officer
Mr. Robert Stader, Chief/EXO
Mrs. Stella Patiño, Senior Financial Officer

Panamanian Electoral Tribunal:

Lic. Dennis Allen, Magistrate President
Lic. Guillermo Márquez, Magistrate Vice-president
Lic. Eduardo Valdéz, Magistrate Vocal
Lic. Carlos Bermúdez, Director, Planning Office
Lic. Marcos Ortega, Deputy Director, Planning Office
Lica. Querube Alexandropulos, former Director, Planning Office
Lic. John Palm, Director, Information Management Office
Lic. Osmań Valdés, (former Procurement Office Chief), Deputy Director,
Identity Cards Office
Lica. Carmen de Cárcamo, Chief, Training Office
Lica. Ingrid de Cuevas, Deputy Director, Public Relations Office
Lic. Guillermo Estrada, Provincial Director/Santiago
Lic. Francisco Conte, Provincial Director/Penonome

Modernoble-Mega Advertising Agency:

Sra. Alida de Iglesias
Sr. Eduardo Iglesias

Comision de Paz y Justicia:

Licda. Irene Perurena, Director

Centro Pro-Democracia:

Ing. Agustín Arias, President
Mrs. Catalina Ledezma, Project Director

USAID/W/IRM:

Mr. Alvaro García

Electoral Tribunal of Costa Rica:

Lic. Rafael Villegas

Instituto Interamericano de Derechos Humanos/CAPEL:

Sra. Sonia Picado, Former Director
Lic. Antonio Cancado de Trincade, Director
Dr. Daniel Zovatto, Sub Director
Lic. Efraín Arguedas
Lica. Ofelia Taitenbaum
Lic Luis Alberto Cordero Brendes
Marcelo Prendes

Advisors:

Sr. Jairo Gómez
Mr. Rodolfo Cerdas
Lic. Gabriel Bonilla

Annex C

LIST OF DOCUMENTS CONSULTED BY EVALUATION TEAM

31

ANNEX C: LIST OF DOCUMENTS CONSULTED BY EVALUATION TEAM

Bonilla, Gabriel, Informe de Ejecucion, Campana de Verificacion, Panama, Septiembre de 1993.

Centro Pro-Democracia, Informe Trimestral Correspondiente al Periodo del 1 de abril al 31 de julio de 1994, Panama, 1994.

_____ Informe Trimestral Correspondiente al Periodo del 27 de mayo al 30 de septiembre de 1993, Panama, 1993.

IIDH/CAPEL, Informe Sobre la Situacion Tecnico/Electoral del TE/Panama en el Marco de las Acciones de Planificacion y Administracion de un Plan para la Depuracion y Actualizacion del Registro Electoral, Panama, Marzo de 1993.

_____ Analisis Estadistico del Padron Electoral de la Republica de Panama, Panama, Marzo, 1993.

_____ Programa de Asistencia Tecnica al Tribunal Electoral de Panama, Segundo Informe Trimestral de Progreso, Panama, Junio, 1993.

_____ Programa de Asistencia Tecnica al Tribunal Electoral de Panama, Tercer Informe Trimestral de Progreso, Panama, Noviembre de 1993.

_____ Informe Final de Actividades y Resultados, Programa de Asistencia Tecnica al Tribunal Electoral de Panama, Julio de 1994.

_____ Programa de Asistencia Tecnica al Tribunal Electoral de Panama, Informe Final, Marzo de 1994.

Latin American Consultant Group, LATCO, Evaluacion Politica de Panama, Panama, Enero, 1994.

Latin American Political Advisers, LAPA, Informe de Situacion, Panama, Marzo de 1993.

_____ Analisis de Riesgo Politico, Panama, Octubre 1992.

Paniagua, Carlos, Focus Groups en Panama, Unimer, Panama, Noviembre, 1993.

Schroth & Associates, A Conversation with the Panamanian People, Final Report, Washington, June, 1993.

Tribunal Electoral, Republica de Panama, Estadísticas Electorales Elecciones Generales del 8 de mayo de 1994, Panama, Julio, 1994.

Unimer,S.A., Encuesta Nacional de Panama, Panama, Diciembre de 1993.

_____ Prueba de Papeletas Unicas de Votacion, Panama, Diciembre de 1993.

_____ Analisis Estadistico del Padron Electoral de la Republica de Panama, Panama, Diciembre de 1993.

USAID/Panama, Project Paper, Improved Electoral Administrations (Project 525-0317), Panama, September, 1992.

_____ Grant Agreement Between the Republic of Panama and The United States of America for the Improved Electoral Administration Project, Grant No. 523-0317, Panama, September 1992.

_____ Cooperative Agreement No. 525-0317-A-00-3183-00 with Instituto Interamericano de Derechos Humanos/CAPEL, Panama, Abril, 1993.

_____ Office of Information Resources Management, Technical and Management Assistance Panama, April, 1992.

_____ Office of Information Resources Management, Technical Assistance for the Electoral Tribunal, Elections Support Systems, Panama, December 1993.