



CEPPS/NDI Quarterly Report: March 10, 2005 to March 31, 2005

**TOGO: SUPPORT FOR A TRANSPARENT AND CREDIBLE ELECTORAL PROCESS
USAID Cooperative Agreement No. DGC-A-00-01-00004-00**

Project Dates: March 10, 2005 to May 10, 2005

Total budget: \$50,000.00 Expenses to date: \$5,224.49

I. SUMMARY

Togolese and international leaders' insistence on a constitutional process for selecting a successor to deceased Togolese President Gnassingbé Eyadéma has resulted in a rare opportunity to expand political space in Togo and assist Togolese working toward more transparent and democratic electoral processes. The Togolese government has announced that it will hold a presidential poll on April 24.

In response to the possibility of a democratic opening and the special election, the National Democratic Institute (NDI), IFES and the International Republican Institute (IRI) proposed to conduct a pre-election assessment and, to the extent in-country conditions permit, additional activities in support of a more open and transparent electoral process. The program's specific objectives are:

- to evaluate the prospects for a democratic transition in Togo;
- to develop a strategy for timely and strategic international support to the electoral process;
- to inform the development and design of democracy support programming in Togo should in-country conditions warrant CEPPS technical assistance; and
- to promote a credible and transparent electoral process.

During the reporting period, NDI deployed two members of the joint six-member assessment team. The Institute publicized the team's joint statement (in English and French) that described its findings and began discussions with USAID, Togolese and other partners regarding the training of political party pollwatchers. A more detailed assessment will be developed during the next reporting period. The assessment team's summary findings are attached to this report (see Appendix A).

II. BACKGROUND

Within hours of President Gnassingbé Eyadéma's death on February 5, 2005, the Togolese military announced that his son, Faure Gnassingbé, would succeed Eyadéma as President. The National Assembly accordingly deposed its president—and Eyadéma's constitutional successor--Natchaba Ouattara. Then it reinstated the younger Gnassingbé to the parliamentary seat he had previously resigned, elected him President of the Assembly and presented him to the Constitutional Court, which swore him in as President of Togo. Despite a ban on constitutional amendments during the transition period, the Assembly also modified the constitution to allow Gnassingbé to serve out the rest of his father's term of office, ending in 2008.

These developments renewed and complicated a longstanding political crisis in Togo. Togolese and international reactions condemned Faure Gnassingbé's accession as a *de facto* coup d'état. Under intense pressure from Togolese democrats, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Africa Union (AU) and other members of the international community, Faure Gnassingbé resigned on February 27. Abass Bonfoh, Vice President of the National Assembly, was sworn in as Interim President and announced a presidential election for April 24. A small ECOWAS team, composed of a Special Envoy and three technical experts, was deployed to provide technical assistance and oversee the election preparation process.

The upcoming Togolese presidential election will take place against a history of decades of clan-based dictatorship, repression and election rigging. Gnassingbé Eyadéma led the first post-independence coup d'état in Africa and ruled Togo as though it were his personal fiefdom for 38 years. After allowing the creation of political parties in the early 1990s, Eyadéma quickly concentrated power again to himself and his close advisors. Togo's reluctance to accept democratic reforms or transparency in elections resulted in suspension of international aid by the European Union and others in 1993. Seeking a resumption of aid, Togo agreed to take certain steps in the direction of reform and hold early legislative elections in 2005. At the time of Eyadéma's death some textual reforms had been adopted, but their future implementation was still uncertain. Eyadéma's unexpected death created uncertainty over the future and the sudden potential for political change, where none had previously existed, prompting Faure Gnassingbé's coup d'état.

Previous efforts at observation or electoral assistance have highlighted therecurrent aspects of Togolese elections that tend to undermine their credibility. These include, among other things: the disputed independence and composition of the National Independent Election Commission (CENI); weak party structure and poor organization among the opposition parties; widespread irregularities in the voter registration process; and the military's close association with the ruling power. In previous elections, opposition parties and civil society groups have also expressed concerns about issues such as the legal framework, unequal access to the media, the announcement and tabulation of results and efforts to prevent party agents and nonpartisan domestic observers from monitoring and reporting on the process.

Despite Togo's history of repression and flawed elections, the events following Eyadéma's death created an unprecedented opportunity for Togolese institutions, political parties

and civil society organizations to expand political space and strengthen electoral processes in Togo.

III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

In response to these developments, a joint IFES, IRI and NDI team visited Togo between March 15 and April 4 to conduct a pre-electoral assessment with the following objectives:

- to provide an analysis of the current pre-electoral environment and prospects for a democratic transition in Togo;
- to determine the existing capacity of the Government of Togo (GOT) to conduct credible, participatory and fair elections;
- to provide recommendations and develop a plan for timely and strategic support to improve the electoral process; and
- to provide technical assistance to the ECOWAS team and key election stakeholders.

NDI contributed two members to the six-member team: Prof. Edward McMahon, formerly the Institute's Director for Africa and currently Research Professor at the University of Vermont; and Ms. Sefakor Ashiagbor, NDI Senior Program Manager.

Over the course of the mission, the team met with a wide variety of Togolese officials, political leaders, civil society organizations and international actors. At the end of the mission (shortly after the end of the reporting period), NDI publicized a joint statement developed by the three organizations. A fuller and more detailed report will be issued in the coming weeks. The statement, with a list of contacts and meetings that the team undertook (see Appendix B), is attached and incorporated by reference.

IV. RESULTS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Objective(s):

- To evaluate the prospects for a democratic transition in Togo;

Result: NDI, IFES and IRI produced and publicized a statement summarizing their evaluation of the prospects for a democratic election on April 24, in French and English.

- To develop a strategy for timely and strategic international support to the electoral process;

Result: NDI's public statement contained recommendations to relevant international actors on actions needed to support the electoral process.

- To inform the development and design of democracy support programming in Togo should in-country conditions warrant CEPPS technical assistance; and

Result: At the end of the reporting period, NDI was discussing potential follow-on activities with Togolese and international partners, specifically including training for Togolese political party poll watchers

- To promote a credible and transparent electoral process.

Result: The assessment mission served as an indicator of international interest in the strength of Togo's democratic processes.

V. EVALUATION/CONCLUSIONS

Evaluation of the pre-election assessment before completion of its detailed report would be premature. Future reports will address this issue in greater depth, though, the assessment team's findings are included in its attached summary statement.

VI. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

At the end of the reporting period, NDI was discussing the possibility of providing training to political party pollwatchers with USAID, Togolese partners, the European Union and ECOWAS. A fuller and more detailed pre-election report will also be distributed during the next reporting period.