HOW TO ORGANIZE A PRE-ELECTION TECHNICAL ASSESSMENT

IFES

International Foundation for Electoral Systems

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IFES International Foundation for Electoral Systems

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FOREWORD

Since 1987, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) has been on the cutting edge of the worldwide democratic revolution. Working in cooperation with the Agency for International Development, IFES has consistently supported AID's agency wide goals to promote democracy by providing critical technical electoral assistance to more than 45 countries.

IFES continues to be one of the few non-governmental organizations solely dedicated to the areas of electoral process and civic education. The wealth of experience and knowledge that IFES has gained over the last five years forms the basis of the IFES Election Manual Series.

Because the field of electoral assistance is still relatively new, there is little in the way of written materials. Consequently the completion of the IFES Election Manual series represents an important contribution to the literature in the field of electoral assistance.

Each set contains following five manuals:

1. How to Organize a Pre-Election Technical Assessment

2. How to Organize an On-site Technical Assistance Project

3. How to Organize an Effective Poll Worker Training Project

4. How to Organize a Program in Civic Education

5. How to Organize and Conduct an Election Observation Mission

The primary purpose of these manuals is to assist IFES in systematizing the implementation of technical assistance in the five areas of pre-election technical assessments, on-site technical assistance, poll worker training, civic education and international election observation. It is especially hoped that development of these manuals will ultimately enable morefficient and effective programs that serve the ultimate purpose to provide necessary technical electoral assistance to countries in need.

These manuals are interrelated and all follow the same general format. They also incorporate a common evaluation strategy found at the back of each manual. The purpose of this strategy is to evaluate the effectiveness of the different types of electoral assistance activities.

The manuals are designed to be readily adapted to include the most up-to-date information possible. The binder format enable the user to keep the manuals current by replacing pages with updated material. This way the manuals can be as adaptable and dynamic as the democratic process itself.

IFES expresses its appreciation to the Office of Economic and Institutional Development of Bureau of Research and Development, US Agency for International Development and acknowledge their support in making the IFES Election Manual Series possible under Cooperative Agreement No. PDC-0023-A-00-1089-00.

IFES also thanks its dedicated staff members, who worked very hard to produce most of the material that went into each of these manuals. Special thanks to Joseph Bauer, who spent many long hours writing and editing the manuals. He also played the key role of managing the entire manual production process.

Special thanks are also in order for IFES Chairman F. Clifton White, whose vision and guidance has been critical to building IFES, and the Members of the Board of IFES for their support.

Completion of the IFES Election Manuals will offer a valuable new resource for the field of electoral assistance. It will enable IFES and other organizations in the electoral assistance field to provide even more efficient, effective and meaningful support for the world's emerging democracies.

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HOW TO ORGANIZE A PRE-ELECTION TECHNICAL ASSESSMENT

I. Project identification, design, management

A. Project Identification

1. Satisfaction of IFES pre-conditions for undertaking a pre-election assessment

- Invitation from the host government
- A democratizing country
- Available funding

Offering appropriate technical assistance to requesting countries is a fundamental purpose of the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) and is consistent with its philosophy of assisting democratic change. Assistance should be considered appropriate when it is tailored to the specific needs of each country, when it takes into consideration the country's long-term goal of building a sustainable institutional base for a democratic electoral system, and when it is provided at the request of the host government. A request from an indigenous organization should be ratified by the host government.

A pre-election assessment (PEA) is one tool that IFES uses to analyze a country's democratic transition and its short- and long-term needs in organizing and sustaining a credible electoral process. The two principle objectives of an assessment are:

- to assure the donor/funder that subsequent assistance is necessary, and
- to gather information that will facilitate design of an appropriate and effective program of assistance.

It is not the policy of IFES to conduct a pre-election assessment in a country whose government has not extended an invitation, either through the U.S. Embassy or the USAID mission, through another organization which will be co-sponsoring or funding the assessment, or to IFES itself.

Since IFES must also assess the extent of the host government's demonstrated and continued commitment to the implementation of a democratic transition process before beginning any substantive project. It may be one of the objectives of the assessment mission to determine the degree to which the government is abiding by internationally recognized standards in its preparation for multi-party elections. At the very least. IFES must be assured that the government will welcome an independent, objective technical assessment, that the assessment team will be given access to all relevant information and people, that the assessment team's presence will not be used in bad faith for propaganda purposes, and that the results of the assessment will be disseminated to all interested parties.

A third condition to be fulfilled in the development of a project is the identification of a funding source, such as U.S. AID, the National Endowment for Democracy, the United Nations, or private foundations or corporations.

2. Timing of assessment in relation to electoral calendar.

An assessment can be carried out usefully at various times during the pre-election period. In general, it should not come before a country has clearly embarked on a path toward a national referendum or multi-party elections. Often, a pre-election assessment can be most useful after a draft election law has been formulated. Where officials have been assigned the task of preparing for elections, the assessment team is able to provide recommendations for revisions to the election law and can discuss election policies and procedures with the officials who are establishing these policies and procedures. Election dates need not be set prior to the assessment team's visit, although it is helpful for a general election calendar to have been formulated, so that sufficient focus can be placed on the electoral process.

It is common for an assessment to be planned subsequent to a government's request for external assistance. One of the primary objectives of the assessment may be to make recommendations for technical and material assistance from the international community. For this reason, the assessment is likely to become the first phase of a multi-phase process. Thus, the assessment would ideally begin and be completed with sufficient time available for interested groups to implement the recommended assistance activities identified in the assessment report prior to the anticipated elections.

3. IFES' objectives in undertaking this project

a. Why did IFES initiate this assessment, or respond positively to the request to undertake this assessment?

b. What are IFES' <u>institutional</u> objectives for this project?

IFES undertakes pre-election assessments (or any project activity) in order to accomplish one of several possible objectives. IFES would undertake a pre-election assessment at the request of a donor with whom IFES has maintained a long and valued relationship or a donor with whom IFES sought to develop such a relationship. Primarily, IFES has been chartered to advance the electoral process in evolving free and democratic societies; therefore, such an assessment project would fulfill an important aspect of IFES' annual operating plan. A pre-election assessment may lead to short- or long-term assistance in the host country. This may take the form of On-Site Technical Assistance such as providing logistics and security planning or commodities acquisition assistance, developing and implementing training programs for poll workers, election officials, and the general population with respect to the electoral process and individual voter responsibilities or developing longer term civic education programs. A PEA may also lead to an election observation mission. All IFES projects and missions should attempt to recover all direct and out-of-pocket costs and also generate support for IFES' core administration, Resource Center, and information dissemination, thereby achieving another objective of IFES' annual operating plan.

It is essential that IFES be clear and explicit about its objectives in carrying out each assessment mission prior to the design and implementation phase. Clarity on this question is critical when determining the scope of the project, when resolving any potential conflict with the project funder, and especially when evaluating the project to determine the degree to which objectives have been fulfilled.

B. Scope of Work

1. Goals, objectives, activities:

a. Are they mutually satisfactory to IFES and to funder?
b. Are they feasible, given constraints?
c. Criteria for evaluation

Once IFES and the project's funder reach agreement on the general terms of reference for the project, IFES project staff can begin to elaborate specific goals and objectives for the project. Certain elements of the project are essential to meeting IFES' objectives, such as expanding the information base in the IFES Resource Center; others may be incorporated at the suggestion of the funder or by the funder on behalf of the host government. Section III, "Implementing the Assessment: Information to Be Gathered", describes the kind of information an assessment should provide. It is imperative that all parties concerned achieve consensus regarding mutual expectations and constraints <u>before</u> the project begins. The IFES assessment proposal may be a bid to carry out activities on a contractual basis, in which case its terms may eventually be binding.

Assessments typically have a wide-ranging scope of work covering not only all aspects of the electoral system, but also the political and social context in which democratization is occurring. The desire for depth and detail, however, must be balanced against the limitations and constraints that are inherent in the assessment project format. Assessment missions are typically only two weeks in length, three weeks at the most. While expanding the number of team members can increase the team's scope, there is little

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marginal benefit from expanding the team beyond three or four members. Therefore, IFES and the funder should negotiate a scope of work that is feasible given the limitations of time and team size, and addresses the need to make the report concise and readable.

The objectives of the project, as reflected in the scope of work or terms of reference for the assessment team, must be written in a form that indicates clearly what the funder expects from IFES and what IFES expects from the team members, including consultants, who will be carrying out the assessment. They also should be written so that their accomplishment is measurable, both by IFES and by the funder. In the evaluation phase of the project, both institutions should be able to clearly assess the degree to which objectives were fulfilled.

2. Budget

a. **What to budget for?**

b. **Arriving at budget agreement with funder**

As the terms of reference and objectives of the project are defined, IFES must begin to develop a project budget. This budget should include all elements of direct and indirect costs based on previous IFES experience and additional information provided by the funder or the host government. Backup documentation and information on the basis of estimation for individual line items should accompany the budget. A primary objective of the budget process is to make the proposed budget as complete and realistic as possible. The PEA proposal and budget may serve as the basis for negotiation with the funder(s) in determining the final PEA scope and budget.

The IFES Pre-Election Assessment budget should be drafted in cooperation with the IFES Director of Finance and Administration. The budget is included as part of the project proposal and is subject to review and approval by IFES executive staff as well as the funder.

C. Negotiating other project parameters

1. Arrangements with host country

a. What are the host government's expectations?

b. Who is the primary point of contact in the government for the assessment team?

As IFES discusses the scope of work of an assessment project with a USAID mission, a U.S. embassy or other funder, it is essential to ensure that the host government is brought into the discussion, either with IFES directly or through the funder as intermediary. IFES should request copies of correspondence between the funder and the host government regarding the initiation of the pre-election assessment mission, and the understanding that the government has regarding the objectives and priorities of the assessment. Also, the funder should be asked to provide a written summary of its discussions with the host government, and a list with names and titles of government officials who will be the assessment team's primary or initial points of contact. This written documentation should also spell out the kind of assistance, if any, that the assessment team should expect from the government, for example, local transportation, office space or facilitation of discussions with officials inside and outside of the government.

2. Arrangements with U.S. Embassy or USAID mission

a. Lodging, transportation
b. Setting up initial meetings

Discussions with the funder and/or the U.S. embassy should also clarify the degree and kind of support that they intend to provide for the team, such as car and driver, office space, access to communication facilities, and the facilitation of contacts with information sources in-country. If the project is AID funded or if judged to be appropriate, the USAID mission and/or the embassy may be requested to make reservations for the team at a suitable hotel in the capital and to meet the team upon their arrival at the airport.

As soon as both IFES and the funder are in general agreement with the arrangements spelled out in the proposal, a Project Authorization should be filled out, covering the proposal, and sent to the appropriate AID/Washington representative. This will meet AID's requirements for its Core support. Authorizing documents will be prepared for each funder/donor (UN, Host Country government, etc) as appropriate.

II. Selection of team

A. Selection criteria

1. Language
2. Country knowledge and/or experience
3. Election administration
4. Issues in democratization
5. Election law
6. Training

As the goals and objectives of the project are being determined, the Program Officer should begin to identify those consultants who may be best suited to accomplish the mission. The size of the team is largely dependent upon the scope of work and available budget. A team may have two to four members, but should have sufficient background and experience to ensure that all aspects of the PEA will be completed satisfactorily.

The initial step in the selection process should be a search of the IFES Resource Center Database. Information on consultants who have been part of prior IFES projects or who have provided detailed information on Individual Data Sheets will be available on-line to the Program Officer. Consultant information may also be gathered through referrals by other Program Officers and Program Officers' previous experience. Secondary sources include universities, private consulting firms, or referrals from consultants. Each potential consultant should be interviewed, perhaps more than once, with a foreign language component if the Program Officer is unsure of the consultant's skills in that area. An Individual Data Sheet must be completed and, if possible, a writing sample should be obtained.

There are a number of criteria that must be considered as the team is selected. Certain skills are required, such as language capability; knowledge of the country, including in-country or regional experience; experience as an election administrator; more general experience in the democratic process; and familiarity with election law and related issues. In some cases, more specialized skills will be required for a particular assessment mission, such as knowledge of computers or of training. It is rare that team members will individually possess all of these skills; however, it is important that as many as possible exist within the team as a whole. Depending on the country, some skills may be difficult to incorporate into the PEA team. It is important that consultants be selected according to how they can best perform as a team and how their collective skills may be applied to complete the scope of work. The Program Officer should consider as many combinations of consultants as possible and always be prepared with alternate selections.

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B. Performance criteria

1. Ability to write and to express oneself
2. Interaction with host country officials and USG officials in-country
3. Successful completion of scope of work

Whatever the team members' special skills may be, they should have adequate command of English, both orally and in writing. Whenever possible, the team leader should have excellent command of the host country's official language(s), and each team member should be expected to interact with host government officials and U.S. government representatives effectively and with sensitivity to the country's culture. The team members will also be expected to contribute substantially to the assessment team's completion of the scope of work and the project objectives as set forth in the project proposal. It should be made clear to all concerned that these expectations will be foremost among the criteria on which the consultant's performance will be evaluated.

C. Interviews

In making decisions regarding the composition of the team, the Program Officer must consider additional factors. One member of the team should be designated (and interviewed) as the team leader. The team leader will act as the team's primary spokesperson while in-country, and will be responsible for bringing the team to consensus on its procedures, priorities, and activities. The team leader serves as the contact for the Program Officer in-country and should be able to provide administrative direction for the team while in-country.

One team member should also be designated the report coordinator. The report coordinator is responsible for reviewing the report as drafted by the team, noting any weak areas, before presenting it to IFES for editing. While the report coordinator may not be required to make specific report writing assignments, the coordinator is responsible for ensuring that all issues raised in the scope of work are addressed by the report. This person will be the initial contact for the Program Officer should questions arise during the report editing process. It is recommended that those consultants with previous experience and familiarity with IFES procedures be chosen as team leaders and report coordinators.

Logistics questions should be included in the interview. How does the consultant respond to the time commitment requested? How rigid is the consultant's schedule immediately following the close of the project? What kind of advance preparations should he or she make? Following the initial selection, the consultant should be contacted by the Contracting Officer to negotiate the consultant's daily rate. The Program Officer needs to be assured that the consultants will be able to complete the scope of work in the time provided and for the amount specified in the budget.

D. Final selection of team members

Final selection of members of the assessment team is usually subject to the approval of the funder and/or the U.S. representative in the field. After the selection of team members is complete, a scope of work should be drafted for attachment to the Subcontract Authorization. The scope of work is also passed to the Contracts Officer to be included in the draft contract. In some cases, if the assessment is AID funded, approval from the U.S. embassy and USAID mission as well as AID/Washington technical and grants officers is required. Field approval is usually based on the team members' qualifications as reflected in their resumes or other documentation.

Approval from the funder is based on qualifications as well as the proposed consulting fee. Request for approval is normally accompanied by documentation of the proposed consultant's salary history and (for AID funded projects) by two authorization forms, the Authorization to Subcontract and the Travel Authorization. Until approval for consultants is received from the field and/or the funder, it is important to remind potential consultants that IFES' intention to contract with them for the assessment is <u>conditional</u>. The request for approval from the field is usually considered a simultaneous request for country clearance.

All contracts should be reviewed and approved by the Program Officer before being given to the consultants for signing. To minimize potential conflicts, consultants should not begin travel or work until consulting agreements have final approvals.

E. Pre departure–team management

1. Travel, shots, visas, advances

- **a. Travel regulations**
- **b. Advances to include transportation funds**
- **c. Check out of computer equipment from IFES**

Many tasks must be completed before the team arrives at IFES offices and before departure for the destination. Once team members are identified, they should be contacted by the IFES Administrative Assistant to make arrangements for air travel, visas, inoculations, medical insurance coverage, and lodging arrangements in Washington, if necessary. Travel Advances are determined by the Administrative Assistant, (and must be approved by the IFES Program Officer,) who is also responsible for ensuring IFES compliance with government regulations regarding travel and per diem as well as those of the funder (as each might apply to this project). For this reason, it is preferable that the Administrative Assistant, rather than the consultant or program staff, make these arrangements.

Specialized resources may be required for use by the assessment team. Examples are laptop computers complete with software and modem, portable printer, etc.

All requests for resources must be approved in advance by the IFES Program Officer. These requests would be fulfilled by the Administrative Assistant.

2. **Briefing book**
   a. **Suggested contents and format**
      1) **Project proposal, including SOW**
      2) **Correspondence with funder and/or host government**
      3) **Consultants' resumes**
      4) **Background information on country**
      5) **News articles on democratization and elections**
      6) **Documents: Constitution, electoral law, etc.**
   b. **Distribution**

Briefing books should be prepared for each team member, with an additional copy for the Resource Center. The briefing book should include, in the following order:

- Project Proposal and Consultant's Scope of Work
- Relevant Correspondence between IFES Washington office, funder, and host government
- Team members' resumes
- Background information on the country
- News articles on the democratization and election process
- Documents such as the country's constitution and electoral law
- A copy of a model IFES report

Each team member should receive the briefing book complete with the individual scope of work with enough time to review it before arrival at the IFES office.

3. Team planning meetings
   a. Scope of work agreement (team and funder)
   b. Performance criteria and IFES expectations
      1) Performance in-country
      2) Quality and timeliness of draft report

c. Resources (materials, people, examples)
   1) Civic education samples
   2) Other assessment reports
   3) Sample laws or other documents
   4) Sample registration materials, ballots, and other forms
   5) Price quotes for election commodities
d. Report outline review
e. Individual work assignments
   1) Role and responsibility of team leader
   2) Role and responsibility of report coordinator
f. Procedures for communications
g. Time sheets and travel expense reports
h. Emergency procedures

To the extent practicable, the two days prior to the team's departure are reserved for briefings and planning meetings in Washington, D.C. This time allows the team members to meet each other, IFES staff to brief the team, and any last-minute information, instructions and concerns to be shared.

During the briefing day(s), the team will meet with several members of IFES staff. Team members are briefed on IFES philosophy and guidelines for conduct in-country. The report writing responsibilities are also outlined in this meeting. In addition to the briefing books, team members are provided at this time with resource materials selected to provide a basis for completion of the various elements of the scope of work, such as examples of civic education materials, electoral laws or constitutions from other countries, sample registration material, ballots, or other forms, and price quotes for commonly referenced election commodities.

The IFES Program Officer and team members should review the outline of the proposed project report and provide instructions on style guidelines. This time should be used to confirm the connection between the project proposal, each individual's scope of work and the design of the project report. The proposed report outline should be used as a basic guide to document observations, findings and recommendations for each of the outline topics. The Program Officer should indicate which team member shall serve as the report coordinator and/or team leader, with an explanation of the role and responsibility of each. The Program Officer should also be able to demonstrate the rationale for individual work assignments by describing the skill set of the team and how the team members complement each other. The team should remain output oriented to ensure that all work assignments are completed and the recommendations are pragmatic, implementable and supported by findings. By the end of the meeting, each participant should have a clear understanding of how they function within the team, with detailed responsibilities assigned among team members for in-country work and preparation of the final report.

The IFES Program Officer is held accountable for the adequacy of support for the project team. In conjunction with the in-country assessment team leader, the Program Officer will make every effort to ensure that resources are available to the team in sufficient quantity and/or quality and when needed. As appropriate, the USAID Mission and/or the U.S. Embassy should be contacted by the Program Officer throughout the period the team is in-country to ensure the team's requirements are satisfied.

The Program Officer should have adequate in-country hotel and telephone information for team members and their families prior to or at least by the day of the team's departure. Team members should be directed to communicate safe arrival in-country directly to IFES or through the U.S. embassy or USAID mission.

The Administrative Assistant and Contracts Officer will brief team members on their travel advances, with instructions regarding completion of time sheets and expense reports. Insurance coverage and emergency instructions should also be part of this meeting. Team members, after reviewing contracts with the Contracts Officer, should sign them and receive copies signed by an executive staff member.

4. Country-specific briefings
   a. AID and State Department
   b. Host country embassy

Current political information and confirmation of expectations are part of the AID/Washington and State Department briefings. These meetings are an opportunity for Department of State and AID officials to become familiar with the team, provide up-to-date country information, and review the expectations of the team including expectations for the verbal and written reporting of the team's findings. It is a time for the team members to ask any questions they might have about their scope of work or about the country's current political climate.

The final set of briefings consists of visits to the host country's Washington embassy and any other persons that the Program Officer believes may provide substantive country information. These include professors, consultants or anyone else who has significant country experience.

F. Post departure – team management and monitoring
   1. Communication
   2. Support

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Following the departure of the team, the Program Officer is responsible for team management and activity monitoring. Decisions regarding team procedure or unexpected situations should be referred to and decided by the Program Officer. The Program Officer also functions as the team's Washington-based support staff, obtaining additional information or making alternate arrangements as requested by the team. The Program Officer should communicate with the team as needed to stay up-to-date on current activities. Specific instructions as to methods and frequency of communications between the in-country team and Washington should be included in the briefing book and reviewed with project staff. The use of PC hardware and software (such as WordPerfect or Lotus) should be specified in advance to ensure full compliance. If the project report is to be drafted in a language other than English, the Program Officer should ensure compatibility of software and availability of the appropriate translation services.

III. Implementing the Assessment In-country

A. In-Country Briefings, Introductions and Protocol Meetings

1. Embassy/USAID briefing

If the funder of this pre-election assessment is U.S. AID, then it is most likely that the assessment team's first activity will be a briefing with officials of the USAID mission and/or the U.S. Embassy. This is an opportunity for the team to formally introduce itself to U.S. officials in-country, and to introduce the assessment mission's terms of reference. The team should ensure that there is a mutual understanding of the goals of the IFES pre-election assessment, and an understanding of the role that the Embassy and the USAID mission will play in facilitating the assessment during the team's time in-country. It is helpful to discuss the team's scope of work in terms of what the embassy and USAID mission see as the most important issues to be addressed.

This is also an opportunity for the team to be briefed by embassy and USAID officials regarding the current political situation in the host country and the prominent players in the democratic transition and election administration.

2. Initial meetings with government, electoral commission counterparts

When IFES assessment missions are U.S. AID funded, it has been the practice for USAID or the U.S. embassy to arrange initial protocol and contact meetings with the government ministries and electoral officials with whom the team will be working. Often the first protocol meetings will be with the minister of external affairs and with the minister of the interior (or whichever ministry has oversight authority regarding elections). It is also common that the team will meet with the director of elections or with the election commission, if one exists. It may be desirable for an official from the U.S. embassy to accompany the assessment team on these first visits, but at the same time, the non-governmental nature of IFES and the non-partisan, non-political stance of the assessment team should be emphasized.

It is important that the purpose, goals, and terms of reference of the assessment mission be clearly expressed at these early meetings with the host government. It is also important that these messages be expressed with consistency. Therefore, the initial introductory statement for the team should be made by the team leader or one individual who has been designated by the team. It is also advisable for the team to have a prepared written statement ready before they begin their host-government meetings. Such a standard statement regarding IFES and the objectives of the assessment can assist all members of the team in keeping their description of the terms of reference consistent. It can also be used to explain the team's purpose to the press, if appropriate.

3. Press release or briefing: pros and cons

It is usually counterproductive for the assessment team to have a high level of visibility in the press. Sometimes, the U.S. embassy or the government will want to arrange for a beginning-of-visit press conference. While this may be useful to the government in exhibiting their willingness to listen to outside advisors, or to the embassy in publicizing its support of democracy, too much media exposure can be detrimental to the assessment mission by absorbing valuable time in a busy schedule and by provoking a deluge of requests for meetings with the team. IFES, in its discussions with the embassy and USAID mission, should encourage them to keep media exposure low-key, at least until the final days of the assessment visit. At the outset of the visit, a brief statement released to the press will give adequate exposure and also clarify the team's mission.

B. Guidelines for whom to meet

1. Government officials, electoral officials

The initial protocol and contact meetings are likely to point the team toward other government officials with whom the team will want to meet. Many of these meetings will be primarily informational in their focus, and one meeting will be sufficient during the course of the team's stay. There are other officials that the team may want to meet with several times during the visit, in working meetings where specific issues of the electoral process are discussed in depth. This latter group may include the election commission, if one exists. It may be of mutual interest to the officials and the team to meet at length or several times to discuss such crucial issues as the registration system, election logistics, and the electoral budget.

The team should refer to the section below on information to be gathered as they prepare a list of government officials to meet with for informational purposes. These might include:

Ministry of Justice:	Constitutional issues; Electoral law, and other related laws: especially if the current laws are in draft form, and revisions are being considered.
Supreme Court Judges (or whichever court decides electoral issues):	The theory and practice of resolving disputes relating to registration, campaign ethics, voting fraud, and certification of electoral results.
Ministry of Finance:	Funding of election; campaigns.

Registrar of political parties:	The process whereby political parties are registered: complaints, constraints, political bias.
Registrar of voters:	The process whereby voters are registered: complaints, constraints, political bias.
Ministry of Education:	Status of civic education in the schools; Min. Ed.'s capacity to assist with civic and voter education programs; capacity to assist with training of registration and poll workers.
Ministry of Information:	Ministry's capacity to assist with civic and voter education programs; the government press and electronic media: their independence, their role in political campaigns.
Directors of government radio and television:	How news of political campaign is reported; role in civic education; access to air-time by political parties.
Bureau of Statistics:	Constituency delimitation (cartographic capability, computerization); civil register: accuracy and computerization; role in vote tabulation.
Government Printer:	Capacity of printing facilities: forms, ballots; degree of autonomy from ruling party; access to reliable paper supplies; security of printing.
Ministry of Interior or Chief of Police:	Role of police in election process: security, crowd control, transportation, communication.
Ministry of Defense:	Role of armed forces in election process.
Minister of Administration:	Organization and Facilitation of the election process.
Minister of External Affairs:	Handling of citizens abroad; provisions for their participation in the election process.

2. Non-governmental organizations

The team should meet with representatives of host country civil society, particularly those who are active members in non-governmental organizations. In many countries, there is an NGO umbrella organization, which, along with providing entree to other NGOs, will give the team a sense of the coherence, organizational capacity, regional and topical scope, and political leanings of the NGO community. Meeting with the umbrella organization, and other NGOs, also can provide the assessment team with a list of the political concerns of a sector of the populace that is neither within the government or active in political parties.

Some specific types of NGOs that the team should seek to meet with include 1) women's organizations, for information on women's involvement in politics and the electoral process; 2) professional organizations, such as teachers or university professors, which can provide information relevant to voter and civic education needs; 3) development NGOs, which are often a good source of information on infrastructure around the country, and on the needs and concerns of the poor and illiterate; 4) student and young people's groups; 5) organizations of ethnic groups; and 6) human rights organizations.

Meeting with international NGOs can also provide information on conditions outside the capital. Some international NGO personnel can provide a valuable perspective on political tensions, level of fear or mistrust, and constraints to a successful democratic transition, especially as seen by the population sectors the NGOs work with.

3. Organized Religion

In many countries, organized religion is an important element of civil society. (In some countries, churches, synagogues, temples and other places of worship may provide the <u>only</u> significant organized structure in civil society.) Meeting with religious leaders can provide the team with another perspective on potential problems and roadblocks in the democratization process. Religious leaders may also express an interest and a capacity in playing a role in civic and voter education and/or organizing domestic election monitors, especially through parochial schools.

4. Political parties

In most situations, it is vital for the assessment team to meet with leaders of the political parties. It is also important to attempt to meet with all parties, so that there is no appearance of bias. In countries where there are too many parties to be able to meet with each individually, an alternative is to arrange for group meetings.

Party leaders are likely to use their meeting with the assessment team as a forum for complaining about the disadvantages they are operating under, particularly if they represent opposition parties. It is often difficult to distinguish valid complaints from electioneering, and team members will likely have to listen to a lot of political campaign speech making in order to hear the valid complaints. A picture of the latter may only appear after speaking to several parties. Assessment team members should be cautioned to listen, document observations and withhold comments and recommendations for inclusion in the final assessment report.

Party leaders are valuable sources not only for their perspective on actual or potential flaws in the electoral system, but also for information on voter awareness and the need for voter and civic education. Where present, attention should be given to minority, ethnically based and/or religious parties to underscore their special problems.

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5. The media

In many developing countries, the radio, television and/or print media may be owned and/or controlled by the government. In some cases, these media may have a legal obligation to give air-time to political parties for campaign broadcasts. Such access to air-time can do a great deal to level the playing field between political parties.

The specific amount of air-time given to news generated by the ruling party is likely to be a contentious issue during the pre-election period. It is sometimes the case that newspaper, television and radio journalists, long accustomed to thinking that the only real news items are those that are handed to them by the government and ruling party, do not have the skills for conducting investigative journalism or doing stories on civil society, even if they have been given complete autonomy by the government. A finding of this sort may lead the team to recommend a training program for journalists.

Independent print journalists should be sought out for their perspective on the political transition and on the role that they see themselves playing in creating an informed electorate.

6. Diplomatic Community

The U.S. is often not the only bilateral donor interested in election assistance in a particular country. It is useful to meet other prominent embassy personnel to discuss their plans for election assistance as well as to hear their perspective on the transition and the electoral process.

7. Multilateral and intergovernmental organizations

The most important multilateral organization to meet with while in-country is the United Nations. The United Nations, through the UNDP and the Resident Representative, is more and more often taking on a role in election assistance. This role may be to provide funds or technical advisors, or it may be limited to coordinating the efforts of other donors, or coordinating the deployment of election observers. For most assessments, it is important that their perspective and their level of involvement in the electoral process be noted in the report.

C. Travel outside the capital

1. Objectives of travel outside the capital

Whenever possible, it is recommended that the assessment team travel outside the capital city for at least one day. This permits the team to:

- Meet with regional and/or district officials who will be organizing and implementing the election process at those levels, to assess the information that they have received about the electoral system, their capacity to organize the process and their need for training;

- Assess the communication system--telephone, radio, telex--between the capital city and the district and provincial levels;

- Get a feel for the condition of the transportation system, and the ease or difficulty with which materials can be shipped from one part of the country to another;

- Assess the level of party activity, and possible constraints on party campaigning, in areas outside of the capital;

- Meet with regionally based NGOs that might play a role in civic education or election monitoring;

- Assess regional or ethnic tensions that might not be obvious in the capital.

- Assess security aspects for participants in future missions.

2. Arranging for travel

Travel outside the capital may require the team to rent a car or charter a plane. In many countries, it is advisable to hire a driver or pilot, preferably someone who is familiar with the region where the team will be traveling. Advance arrangements should be made to meet with regional government officials. Usually this can be arranged from the capital through the ministry of administration or the ministry of interior. Arrangements for overnight lodging should be made in advance as well. It is critical that IFES Washington be informed on a timely basis of all travel within the host country.

IV. Implementing the Assessment: Information to be Gathered

Information should be gathered by the assessment team so that they are able to address the following topics and issues in the pre-election assessment report. Some of this information will be available to the team before they arrive in country. Most will be gathered in meetings and interviews during the team's one to three weeks in-country.

A. Context of democratization

1. Geography and demographics
2. Historical setting
3. Societal, cultural, and ethnic implications
4. Political changes and current electoral processes
5. Economic climate and infrastructure
   a. Formal
   b. Informal
6. Recent and current events towards democratization
7. Democratizing institutions
8. Constraints

Team members should be well versed in the country's history, geography and development. This background information serves to put the up-coming election into context. Briefings should cover the following questions:

- The geographical situation and regional security situation. Is the country alone in the region in conducting multi-party elections or surrounded by democratic neighbors? What effect has this setting had on the holding of elections? A map should be provided.

- The historical setting. Does the country have a history of independence/colonialism; of democracy/dictatorship; of peace/violence; of regional cooperation/isolationism? What has been the impact of these factors?

- Societal, cultural and ethnic implications. Is the society split into different classes of people by reason of wealth/heritage/education? Is the culture western-oriented? What are the dominant religions? What is the position of women? Is the country divided along ethnic/tribal/clan lines? What provisions are made for guaranteeing minority rights? What is the human rights record of the government/opposition? Are politics personality or issue oriented?

- **Political changes and current electoral processes.** How long has the current government been in power? What factors have brought about a multi-party election? Is there an organized opposition? When was the current electoral law adopted? Was the law adopted with the agreement of all political players?

- **Economic climate and infrastructure.** Does the government control the means of production? What efforts, if any, have been made in the direction of privatization? Is the country's trade dependent on only one major export? What is the average monthly wage and the rate of inflation? Has recent change, for better or worse, occurred in the economy? Is there a 'black market' economy? Is the currency convertible? Is the country receiving and implementing advice received from the IMF and the World Bank? Is the country a member of a regional trading bloc?

- **Recent and current events towards democratization.** Why has the government legalized opposition parties and called a multi-party election? Is the opposition free to organize? What laws have been passed to enable a multi- party election to take place? Does the public understand that they have a choice of political parties?

- **Democratizing institutions.** Has an independent central electoral commission been established? Have political parties been allowed to register freely? Is there an independent judiciary? Does the media operate freely?

- **Constraints.** Is there civil order in the country? Are political parties allowed to operate freely, both according to the law and in practice? Is there a real separation of powers? Do communications allow the majority of the population to be informed about the electoral process? Does the security apparatus intimidate the opposition/electorate?

All of this background information as shown above, particularly that which focused on recent events in the political transition, form the basis of understanding for the team's assessment while in-country and team members should, therefore, be familiar with most of this information before they arrive in-country. To the degree possible, it is to be included in the briefing book given to team members before their departure, this information should be summarized in the opening chapter(s) of the assessment report. Special attention should be given to constraints identified prior to going in-country.

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B. Relevant laws, codes, and regulations

1. Constitution and legal framework
2. Election laws (and media, campaign finance, ethics, etc. laws)
3. Structure of governing bodies and relationship to election administrators

The constitution, electoral law and other relevant laws may be available to the team before they arrive in-country. In some cases, the team may not see these documents until their arrival, particularly if they are still in draft form. The team should be thoroughly familiar with these documents as they begin their in-country meetings. If the constitution and electoral laws are not open for discussion and revision, then they define the "givens" of the electoral system. All discussions of procedures, needs, materials, and fairness will be based on the already established legal framework. If the constitution and/or the laws are in the process of being discussed and revised, then the team may be in a position to provide valuable input regarding consistency within and between these documents, the explicit or implicit constraints to democracy contained in the laws' provisions, the feasibility of the procedures specified in the law, and many other areas.

The team should become familiar with the bureaucratic structure of the government, particularly the relationship between relevant ministries in theory and practice, the relationship between the presidency and the ministries, and the relationship between the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government.

Often, the election administration body within the government has been newly created for the current democratic transition. The team should investigate the legal and bureaucratic standing of this body, particularly its ability to establish and control its own budget, to hire and fire staff, and to make policy and procedural decisions without interference from other ministries or levels of government from which it may be nominally autonomous.

C. Timing of elections

1. Technical and administrative considerations
2. Domestic political considerations
3. Donor considerations

If dates for elections have been set, it is important for the team to discover the reasons, historical, practical or political, that those dates have been chosen. The team should be in a position to assess whether a chosen date puts a political party or parties at an unfair disadvantage, such that, if the elections do occur on that date, they cannot be considered free and fair. The team should also assess

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whether the administrative tasks that must be accomplished before the election day can conceivably be accomplished.

The date of elections will be of relevance to donors as well. Among other reasons, the length of the period before elections should give them sufficient time to provide the assistance which they or the government deem necessary. Based on its analysis of all the above factors, the team may recommend proceeding with the election or changing the date, perhaps for administrative or technical reasons, and thus must understand what the political ramifications might be.

D. Electoral institution and officials

1. **Structure, autonomy**
2. **Capacity, effectiveness**

As noted above, the government body charged with administering elections may or may not have an appropriate level of autonomy from the ruling party. This autonomy lies in its ability to make and implement decisions regarding the registration and electoral process, and also in its ability to control its own budget and staff.

The structure of the electoral institution is important as well, in its inclusion or exclusion of a wide range of political voices. It is important that the body be (and be perceived as being) either non-partisan or multi-partisan. The inclusion of representatives of many or all political parties is often desirable, but a large body can become unwieldy unless executive power is delegated to an individual or small committee. Therefore, the internal organization of the electoral institution is also important to investigate, in determining its ability to balance the need for democratic input with the need to make many daily decisions quickly and firmly.

It is often the case that those individuals assigned to administer multi-party elections, whether they are formed into a new election commission or are working out of an already existing ministry, are taking on that task for the first time. Therefore, it is important for the team to assess the level of experience and administrative capacity of the electoral body, and the implied level of needed training or technical assistance.

E. Political parties

1. **History, platforms, and leadership of political parties**
2. **Registration: legal process, problems, constraints**
3. **Access to resources**

4. Capacity to organize and to campaign
5. Role in election policy decision-making and representation on election commissions
6. Willingness to participate in electoral process and accept results of elections

An important component of a pre-election assessment is a survey of the ability of political parties to conduct a campaign effectively, freely and fairly. The assessment team should gather information for inclusion in the report on the existing and emerging political parties, with basic information on their policies and leadership. Information on new or changed political parties and updates to existing parties should be collected for entry into the IFES Resource Center Database for future reference.

One element in assessing the fairness of a campaign is the degree to which a party's activities are helped or hindered by the government and/or ruling party. The team should investigate the process whereby parties are registered, and assess whether the process is unnecessarily and undemocratically complicated or burdensome. Often, governments assist political parties in the run-up to elections by providing some financing and/or some right of free access to government radio and television. Political parties are also often given representation on the governmental body that is making electoral policy and administering the election, or at least provided with a forum for expressing their views on electoral laws and procedures. Another area of party-government interaction which the team should investigate is the degree to which ruling party resources are kept distinct from government resources, and how transparent that distinction is to the other parties and to the general populace.

A second element in the ability of parties to effectively reach the voter with their messages is their own internal capacity, in terms of human and material resources, to organize and mobilize their supporters, to publicize their platform, and to conduct a national campaign. In an emerging democracy, there are likely to be a plethora of small, weak, personality-based parties which are not operating on a "level playing field" with the ruling party and other more established parties. Such a playing field would be considered level if all are equally subject to the same rules with a reasonable access to resources. The assessment team should gather information on the internal constraints that parties face so that a preliminary assessment can be given in the report on the likelihood that the campaign process can be deemed free and fair. In addition, a determination should be made as to whether the weaker (newer or less experienced) parties are at a disadvantage due to either a lack of experience or the electoral "rules".

Political parties have a role to play in informing the voters, at least their supporters, about how, why and when to register and to vote. Assessing their ability to carry out this role, especially in the countryside, is an important element in establishing the need for an externally assisted voter and civic education program.

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The results of elections will often be challenged by the losers. This challenge can come within the rules of the electoral system, or outside the established procedures. The assessment team should attempt to gather information regarding the willingness of competing political parties to accept the election process as a legitimate expression of the will of the electorate and to abide by the results.

F. Political Campaigning

1. Conduct/climate of campaign (level of fear, mistrust)
2. Access by parties to campaign financing
3. Access to media
4. Freedom of movement, freedom from harassment and intimidation

As noted above, the conduct of the political campaign and the environment in which political parties operate is an important element in an electoral system's capacity to produce a credible and legitimate result. The impediments to free and fair political competition go beyond the bureaucratic barriers that may be constructed by the government. The assessment team should look at the actual practice of political party competition, particularly if the campaign period has formally begun. An assessment of the level of fear, mistrust and hostility between parties and specifically between opposition parties and the ruling party will, among other things, provide input into an analysis of the required confidence-building and fraud-prevention measures that must be built into the electoral system.

An assessment of parties' access to the media and their relative exposure in media news stories as well as their relative access to public funding for their ca[illegible] (especially if the ruling party receives an explicit or implicit subsidy by virtue of its symbiotic relationship with the state) lays important groundwork for later analysis of the fairness of the electoral process. Assessing the parties' freedom of movement and assembly is especially important outside the capital, where conditions may be radically different as determined by local rather than national officials.

G. Voter Education and Civic Education

1. Distinction between voter education and civic education
2. Assessing the need
3. Constraints and special issues

IFES has found that it is useful to make a distinction between voter education and civic education. The division between the two topics is not entirely clear cut; however, they can be defined as having different subject matter and different implementing institutions. Additionally, a distinction must be made between short and long-term civic education, where the short-term civic education tends to election-related and directed toward voter education which may be carried out primarily, although not exclusively, by governmental bodies. It refers to the task of informing the electorate of how, when, where and why to register and to vote. Civic education is a more broadly defined and generally a long-term program with the goal of disseminating information to the population as a whole about the theories, principles and practices of democratic governance. It is not necessarily focussed on an election period. While government can have a role in implementing civic education programs, particularly through school curricula, civic education is, to some degree, a task of civil society, embodied both in political parties and in non-partisan, non-governmental organizations.

The assessment team should gather information on both the need for voter and civic education and the capacity of host country institutions to respond to that need. A gap between the observed need and the internal capacity to meet that need should lead to a recommendation for external assistance in this area. In discussing external assistance, it is useful to keep clear the distinction between short-term, (government-implemented) voter education and longer-term, (NGO-implemented) civic education. It is also important to note the existing impediments to implementing programs of either type, such as illiteracy, linguistic diversity, infrastructure limitations, limits to the reach of mass communication media, an atmosphere of mistrust or fear of the government, or a scarcity of NGOs that have either the interest or the capacity to carry out an effective non-partisan civic education program. The assessment team should also gather input on the type of information within the range of voter and civic education programs that should be given priority, and on the most effective and culturally appropriate mechanisms for disseminating that information. Finally, the assessment team should determine the extent to which gender, minority, ethnic, racial, religious, etc., status is a constraint to the civic education process.

H. Constituency delimitation

1. **Constituencies as defined in electoral law**
2. **Other options**
3. **Criteria for establishing constituency boundaries**
4. **Techniques for delimiting constituencies**

One of the first tasks in establishing an electoral system is defining and delimiting the constituencies from which voters will elect their representatives. The electoral constituencies of a country are usually defined in its electoral law. Sometimes existing administrative divisions are used as the electoral constituency. In other cases, voting districts are drawn that are distinct from administrative districts, or there is only one nationwide constituency used. Whatever system is defined in the electoral law or is being discussed at the time of the team's visit, one major question to examine is the degree to which the system conforms to the principle of one-person one-vote. Another is the impact of constituency delimitation on supply distribution and on the number of poll workers needed.

The team should visit the government's bureau of statistics or the cartographic office to meet with the officials who will be charged with providing demographic information used in determining constituencies and actually carrying out the task of mapping the country's voting districts.

I. Registration of voters

1. **Registration system: options**
2. **Timing of registration**
3. **Registration cards**
4. **Electors lists**
5. **Registration personnel**
6. **Voter education**

The system of registering voters is one of the most complex and expensive of the components of any country's electoral system. It can also be one of the most controversial. A poorly conducted registration process, or a system that is not the product of a consensus among all major political actors, is almost guaranteed to result in a disputed election and a shaky beginning for multi-party democracy. Depending somewhat on the timing of the assessment team's visit, it is likely that the team will spend a large share of its time in-country discussing registration issues. Information should be gathered on the following questions so that solid findings can be reported and recommendations made.

1. Registration system: current plan or options under consideration

a. What registration system is currently specified in the electoral law or is currently under discussion?

b. What are the advantages and disadvantages (for security, efficiency of voting process, cost-cutting) of a single-step process of registration at the time of voting versus a registration prior to elections?

c. Is a no-registration system feasible?

d. Which registration system is most practically matched with the electoral system specified in the current law (i.e., proportional representation or single-member districts)?

e. What is the team's recommendation, on a cost-benefit basis, for the preferred registration system for the country to implement?

2. Timing of registration

a. Is the length of the registration period sufficient to enable all those eligible to register without undue inconvenience?
b. Does the period for registration take into account the flow of refugees or displaced persons during the months before the election or the impact of weather conditions?
c. Is there a cut-off date for registration that will provide sufficient time to produce reliable polling station electors' lists (if such lists are being used) and to obtain and distribute the appropriate commodities to all stations?

3. Registration cards

a. What is the current system of national identification, and the status of civil registry and personal documentation?
b. Will voter registration cards be issued to all eligible voters? Is this feasible? How long is it likely to take?
c. What type of card will be used: photo? laminated? simple card in plastic pouch? no plastic pouch? Does the proposed card fit the needs in the most economical way?
d. Do the expensive options provide increased security such that the increased expense is recommended or necessary?
e. What means are available for guarding against forgery of registration cards?
f. What information will be included on a registration card?
g. Is (will) a national ID card (be) issued that is distinct from a voter's ID?

4. Electors lists

a. If electors lists will be used at the polling stations will they be locally or centrally compiled?
b. Will the compilation of electors lists be computerized? If not, is computerization feasible? Desirable?
c. If a national voters registry currently exists, how accurate is that list?
d. Is there a mechanism by which the public and the political parties can review the electors list with sufficient time before the election so that revisions may be made?
e. What is the mechanism for challenging and revising the electors list?
f. What is the mechanism for resolving disputes regarding the electors list?
g. How will the list be used on election day?

5. Registration personnel

a. If a national registration campaign is planned, how will that be carried out? How much time and how many people will be dedicated to this task? Have all available options for carrying out a registration drive been considered, and the most cost-effective one chosen?
b. What types of people should make up the registration teams? What are their qualifications?
c. How many teams are recommended, and of what size?
d. Will the registration teams be mobile, or operate from fixed sites?
e. How will they be trained? (how long? where? covering what information?) What training material will be prepared?
f. Have sufficient funds been budgeted for this activity?

6. Voter education

a. What office or ministry is responsible for disseminating information about why, how, when and where to register?
b. When will the information campaign begin? Is sufficient time allotted to this task?
c. What methods will be used to disseminate this information? Do the methods appear to be cost effective?
d. Have sufficient funds been budgeted for this activity?

J. Poll workers

1. Numbers
2. Qualifications
3. Recruitment
4. Training
   a. Training design
   b. Training materials
5. Roles and responsibilities
6. Election workers and vote tabulators at district and regional levels
   a. Qualifications and recruitment
   b. Training

The workers at polling stations on election day make up one of the most important components of an electoral system. The assessment team should gather information on the numbers and qualification of needed poll workers and on current plans for the recruitment and training. The team should determine whether opposition parties will have input into the selection of poll workers, and if not, whether government-selected poll workers will be trusted to perform their responsibilities without bias.

The training of poll workers is one of the most expensive and logistically complex components of the electoral system. The team should discuss the plan for training the thousands of needed poll workers and assess whether is it likely to be feasible and effective. The team should also assess whether sufficient funds have been budgeted for this activity, and whether external financial or technical assistance is needed.

K. Ballot Design and Security

1. **Single v. multiple ballot**
2. **Need for sophisticated anti-counterfeiting measures**
3. **Accounting and tracking mechanisms: serial numbers, counterfoils, etc.**
4. **Printing capacity in-country**
5. **Ballot storage and distribution plans**

Ballots are obviously a crucial element in an electoral system; they are also one of the most problematic. Basic decisions about ballot design can play a large role in the cost of the elections and in the voters' comprehension of the voting process. One basic option is between a single ballot for each office being elected and a multiple ballot system where there is one ballot for each candidate. The cost advantages of the single ballot system must be weighed against considerations of tradition and of comprehension, particularly for illiterate voters.

Much effort is put into the prevention of the counterfeiting of ballots and the stuffing of ballot boxes. The assessment team should examine what is planned and what is needed in terms of sophisticated anti-counterfeiting measures, and in terms of mechanisms for tracking the distribution and use of ballots. Again, security needs must be weighed against financial limitations, while acknowledging that often sufficient security can be assured with systems that are not necessarily the most complex or most expensive.

One important element in providing ballot security is simply good organization, so that ballots are well-guarded and distributed carefully with sufficient controls built in. The team should thus examine the proposed system for storing and distributing ballots.

L. Election Commodities

1. Ballots
2. Ballot boxes
3. Voting screens
4. Indelible ink
5. Election-related equipment
6. Others

At the time of the team's visit, the government will probably have plans for as well as questions about the design and procurement of specialized election commodities. The decisions made on both topics, design and procurement, can have a large impact on the efficiency and cost effectiveness of the electoral system. The assessment team should be prepared to assess plans for:

- 1) the design and printing of ballots;
- 2) the type and quantity of ballot boxes and voting screens;
- 3) the use of indelible ink or other security related commodities, and
- 4) options for type and for suppliers.

Teams may be met with grandiose "wish lists" that must be examined in light of life cycle maintenance cost and the overall contribution to the electoral process. Identical requests for commodities may be submitted to multiple potential donors. It is crucial to determine which body has ultimate authority to make requests (or for procurement) and to whom the request have been or are planned to be made. Donor coordination to prevent duplication is of the utmost importance. It is often helpful if the assessment team can provide some recommendations regarding prices and suppliers to government officials while in-country.

M. Transportation and Communication

1. Roads and communication system
2. Transport and communication needs
   a. Registration period
   b. Election period
3. Government's capacity to meet transport and communication needs of registration and election process
   a. Current status of government planning
   b. Coordination between election officials and other government ministries regarding transportation and communication

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4. Role of military in transportation and communication during registration and election process
5. Need for external assistance in communication and transportation

Transportation and communication are likely to be two very expensive categories in the government's electoral budget. There are times during the registration and voting periods when the requirements for moving people and materials around the country quickly and reliably are enormous. The need for reliable nationwide communication, particularly during the crucial days before, during, and after election day, is also obvious. The assessment team should carefully examine the government's plans to cope with those needs. They should assess the degree to which the government has begun the task of calling on its own resources for election-related transportation and communication. In these two areas, the ability and willingness of the government to make all possible use of its internal resources will have a large impact on the team's recommendations regarding needed external assistance to meet the transportation and communication needs that cannot be met by the country itself.

N. Election operations (as specified in electoral law or current government plans)

1. Procedures for voting
2. Security measures at polls
    a. Role of police and/or armed forces
    b. Role of civilian election workers
3. Security measures for transportation of ballots
4. Vote counting and certification of election results
    a. Location of vote counting
    b. Method of reporting vote counts to capital
    c. Mechanism for disseminating vote count information

The team should gather information on the government's current plans for the processing of voters and for vote counting. They should be able to describe and analyze in their report the procedures for voting, vote counting, and vote tabulating and reporting. They should examine whether the procedures developed by the government are consistent with the requirements of the electoral law, and whether they provide sufficient guarantees that the elector's vote will be secret and will be counted and tabulated accurately. The team should examine plans for security on polling day, particularly the role of police and armed forces in light of their ability to carry out that task reliably and without intimidation or prejudice and in light of the general populace's attitude toward the police and military.

O. Computerization

1. Need and feasibility
   a. Voters registry
   b. Vote counting and tabulating
2. Current capacity
   a. Hardware
   b. Software
   c. Technical capability

The assessment team should examine carefully the need, feasibility and current capacity for computerizing components of the registration and vote counting processes. While entering data from the voter registration process into a computerized database can greatly facilitate revision and compilation of the voters registry, it is often not feasible to enter so much new data within the time available without a prohibitive outlay for computer hardware and for data processors' salaries. Complete computerization of the voters registry may have to wait until after the elections.

Similarly, computerization of the vote tabulating process may enable results to be compiled and announced more quickly than a manual system. In many developing countries, however, the reliability of a computerized counting system is mitigated by the potential of power outages, inexperienced data processors, untried software programs, and the worry that computer programs can be "fixed" by the ruling party or others. In other words, computerization does not necessarily lead to the goal of a fast and reliable system.

The assessment team should gather information on current government and, if appropriate, private computer capabilities. The government's bureau of statistics, the census bureau, the civil registry office, or even ministries of health, agriculture or trade (where national statistics are likely to be compiled) are all potential sources for this information as well as sources for assistance to the elections commission. Giving the government needed advice on computer usage in the electoral system may be beyond the technical capacity of the assessment team. In that case, the team should provide sufficient information in their report so that a detailed scope of work for any subsequent technical assistance project in this area could be written.

P. Role of election observers

1. International
   a. Legal status

b. Government's and political parties' attitude regarding international observers

c. Level of need for international observers

d. Appropriate number of international observers

2. Local

a. Party poll watchers

b. NGO-sponsored monitors

In some countries, international election observers are given formal legal status in the electoral law, in which the rights and responsibilities of observers are set forth. In other countries, outside observers may be welcome, and their role outlined in a more informal code of conduct. In this latter case, the role of the observer in the process may need to be determined and clarified. Governments are sometimes reluctant to invite international observers, fearing that their presence will be intrusive in a domestic process. The team should clarify these issues of legal status and attitude, and also discuss with the government the role that the host government the role they plan to play in financing or coordinating observers while in-country.

The presence of international observers can fulfill a number of objectives, that may or may not be shared among the international community, the host government, the opposition parties and the general population. Observers can serve to indicate international interest and concern, defuse tension, raise the confidence level of voters, and deliver an independent message to international and domestic audiences about the conduct of the elections. The assessment team should note which objectives are of highest importance in their specific country, and recommend how many observers are needed.

It is often the case that political party poll watchers are given a legal status in a country's electoral law. The pertinent issues for the assessment team to investigate in regard to party-poll watchers are their legal status and role, the capacity of the political parties to place their agents in the polling stations, and the plans for training these agents.

The issue of non-partisan domestic monitors is often more controversial than party poll watchers. Some governments do not recognize that a domestic group of observers can act in a non-biased way, and thus refuse to grant permission or credentials to domestic monitors. In many cases, an indigenous non-governmental and non-partisan organization with the capacity to organize and train domestic monitors does not exist. The assessment team should gather information on the need, the legality and the feasibility of fielding teams of domestic monitors, and make recommendations on what role the international community could usefully play in assisting with training and organization.

Q. Budgetary needs of the election process

1. Review of existing government budget or budget proposal
    a. Personnel
        1) Election commission and support staff
        2) Regional and district officials
        3) Registration teams
        4) Poll workers
        5) Drivers, security, and other support
    b. Training
        1) Stipends
        2) Materials: design, printing and distribution
        3) Transportation
        4) Trainers fees
    c. Election materials: consumables
        1) Registration forms, cards, manuals
        2) Ballots
        3) Election day forms
        4) Electors' lists
        5) Indelible ink
        6) Other
    d. Election materials: non-consumables
        1) Ballot boxes
        2) Voting screens
        3) Other
    e. Computerization
        1) Hardware
        2) Software and programming
        3) Data entry
    f. Communication
    g. Transportation
    h. Other: Office equipment, office rental, etc.

2. Review of mechanism for elaborating and discussing budget within government and between political parties
3. Assessment of government capacity to meet electoral budget needs
4. Review of request for donor assistance

The assessment team may be presented with a detailed electoral budget by the government and asked to review it while in-country. Conversely, the team may be asked to help the government draw up an electoral budget during their visit. In either case, it is usually expected that the team will make detailed comments on the electoral budget in the report, with special emphasis placed on what may have been left out of the budget, and what components of the electoral system might be implemented in a more cost-effective way.

The team should also gather information to be included in the report on the bureaucratic mechanisms by which an electoral budget has been or will be developed, and on the capacity of the government to meet electoral budget needs through its own resources. This latter question should form the background for the team's review of the government's request for donor assistance to the electoral process, if one exists.

R. International and donor support

1. **Possible assistance from other bilateral and multilateral sources**
2. **Mechanisms for donor coordination**

The team should discuss with the government and with other parties and groups involved in the electoral process the areas in which donors could most usefully provide assistance. The team should list and prioritize the various recommended areas of assistance, and, to the degree possible, provide budget estimates for each of the recommended activities. Additionally, the team should provide the host government with recommendations on how they should proceed with the task of obtaining technical assistance and election commodities. The team may wish to recommend the creation of an independent commission to coordinate communications with potential funders/donors.

V. Implementing the Assessment: In-Country Reporting and Debriefings

A. Reporting on findings to the host government

In most cases, the assessment team will be expected to meet with officials of the host government at the end of its stay to report orally on the team's major findings and recommendations.

B. Debriefing with funder/U.S. Embassy/USAID mission

If the funder of the assessment mission is U.S. AID, team members will be expected to orally debrief USAID and embassy officials prior to their departure from the country. The team should be prepared to outline its findings and recommendations, particularly those regarding possible donor assistance to the electoral process. Often, the funder will expect to receive a written report from the team prior to its departure. The outline for such a report will be clearly expressed in the team's scope of work and in team members' contracts.

C. Washington debriefings

When possible, IFES schedules a debriefing for the team in Washington, at the IFES office and, particularly if the assessment is AID funded, with officials of the Department of State and U.S. AID. This, too, is usually an oral debriefing on the team's findings and recommendations.

VI. Writing the Assessment Report

A. Division of Tasks among the team members

An assessment team may be made up of two to four members. The team should determine a preliminary division of report writing tasks prior to their travel, with the guidance of the IFES Program Officer. When areas of concentration are determined prior to departure, or early in the team's visit, team members should be able to begin writing their sections during the time in-country. Because members of the assessment team are chosen to complement each other's specialties, it should not be difficult to assign portions of the overall task as outlined in the scope of work to individual team members.

Usually, one member of the team is designated as report coordinator. This person is often the team leader. The role of the report coordinator will be specified in the individual's contract, and will generally detail the assignment to coordinate determining writing responsibilities of sections of the report to team members; receiving each member's draft section and ensuring that it fulfills the expectations of the scope of work; and assembling the draft sections into a coherent whole to be submitted as the team's draft to IFES. IFES generally requires that the team's draft report be received by IFES within approximately ten days after their departure from the country where the assessment took place.

B. Table of Contents (Example)

1. Executive Summary
2. Introduction
3. Context of Democratization
    a. Relevant facts of country geography and population
    b. Historical overview
    c. Recent events in democratization process
4. Legal Context
    a. Constitution
    b. Electoral Law
    c. Other relevant laws
5. Electoral institutions and officials
6. Political parties and campaigning
7. Constituency delimitation
8. Voter registration
9. Poll workers and training

10. Election materials, equipment and operations
11. Computerization, transportation, communication
12. Constituent groups of the electorate
    a. Women
    b. Military
    c. Ethnic/racial minorities
13. Election observers
14. Review of election budget
15. Donor support and assistance
16. Recommendations
    a. Election laws, procedures, policies
    b. Election material and equipment
    c. Election budget
    d. Donor assistance
17. Summary
18. Appendices
    a. Persons interviewed
    b. Organizations contacted
    c. Samples: forms, ballots, etc.
    d. Laws and codes
    e. Other electoral documents
    f. Media coverage of the team's visit

IFES suggests that the report follow the above format, with each of the 18 elements becoming a chapter in the report. In those cases, where the information for an element is not sufficient for a chapter, IFES will still expect that all of these topics be covered somewhere in the report. Guidance to style, format and grammar must be provided by the Program Officer in advance of writing the draft report.

D. Editing the Report: The role of IFES program staff

Usually, the team's draft report is received by the IFES Program Officer who has been acting as the project manager. That Program Officer also acts as the report editor. The first task of the editor is to determine whether the assessment team has fulfilled its scope of work as defined in the members' contracts by adequately covering all of the specified elements in the draft report. If there are gaps in the information provided in the draft report, the Program Officer should quickly inform the team members of the areas where more work is needed. For this reason, the Program Officer should not approve payment of consultants' fees until the draft report has been thoroughly reviewed.

Ideally, the assessment report should be reviewed by at least two IFES staff members in addition to the Program Officer responsible before it is accepted as final. Usually, the secondary reviewers/editors will be the Senior Program Officer, the Program Director or the Deputy Director. IFES usually delivers the completed report to the funder within three weeks of the assessment team's departure from the country.

VII. Monitoring and evaluation strategy

Pre-election assessments can and should be evaluated on several levels, using a variety of evaluative tools, with several different audiences and purposes in mind. Each type of evaluation listed below is described in terms of the questions: 1) What is being evaluated? 2) Why is it being evaluated? 3) How is it to be evaluated? and 4) Who is the audience for the evaluation and how is the evaluation passed on to the relevant audience?

A. Evaluating team members' performance

The performance of each individual assessment team member should be evaluated, for two primary purposes:

a) to assess whether the scope of work and other formal expectations have been fulfilled sufficiently to justify payment of consultant's fee; and

b) to leave an evaluative record of the consultant's work in his IFES file. This will provide an audit trail for the Consultant's SOW and performance review by funder (if required) and to better judge the consultant's suitability for future IFES assignments.

The IFES Program Officer who managed the assessment project should solicit feedback from the USAID mission, the U.S. embassy or other funder with whom the consultant interacted in the field, regarding the consultant's performance according to the pre-established criteria: a strong command of English and the official language; positive interaction with host country officials and USG officials in-country; and substantive contribution to the tasks outlined in the scope of work. Program Officers should add their evaluative comments on those performance criteria, based on Washington briefings and debriefings and on the assessment report.

The Program Officer's evaluation of the assessment team members should be written and placed in the consultant's confidential file at IFES.

B. Evaluating project design and support

IFES' project design and support to the assessment team should be evaluated by the team members with the primary evaluative criterion being: Did IFES enable the consultants to do as good a job as possible in carrying out the assessment? The purpose of this evaluation is to give feedback to IFES on its general administrative procedures in designing and supporting a pre-election assessment, so that the design and support can improve with future assessments.

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The Program Officer asks the assessment team members to give feedback for this evaluation after the completion of the assessment project, requesting that they give a written response evaluating project elements such as:

a) make-up of the assessment team: size; complement of skills, of personalities; appropriateness of choice of team leader and report coordinator
b) preparations for the assessment: briefing book; accuracy of verbal description of project task; quality and applicability of Washington briefings
c) IFES support to team while in-country
d) length of stay in-country
e) length of time given for consultant's report writing
f) overall project design: feasibility and appropriateness of scope of work

The team members' written evaluation should be sent to the Program Officer, who will share the comments with other program staff and use the consultants' suggestions to make improvements in assessment project management.

C. Evaluating project's responsiveness to funder's and host country's needs

The project as a whole should be evaluated according to how well it responded to the needs of the host country and the funder. Evaluation of this question can be profitably carried out both immediately after the completion and following delivery of the assessment report, and several months later.

1. Immediate project evaluation

The evaluative questions that the IFES Program Officer should discuss with the project funder, and to the extent possible host government officials, include:

- Was the project scope of work sufficiently comprehensive and sufficiently focussed to meet the needs of the funder and the host country?
- Were the individual objectives of the scope of work fulfilled, through the assessment team's work in-country and through the assessment report?
- Was the IFES response to the need and the request for a pre-election assessment generally satisfactory?

- What, if any, are the near-term ways in which IFES can continue to be responsive to the needs of the funder and the host country in their preparations for elections?

The means for gathering answers to these questions, from the funder and from host country officials, may vary. Informal means, such as telephone calls, often can solicit a more frank and comprehensive response. It is important, however, to also solicit written responses to these questions, if possible.

The funder and host country evaluation of the project should be collected, recorded in writing (if given verbally), commented on by the IFES Program Officer, and included in the permanent project file. A copy is also placed in the evaluation file in the Director's office, where it can be shared with other IFES staff members, funders, and board members, as appropriate. The funder and host country evaluations should also be presented at the project evaluation meeting convened by the regional Program Director. (See item D, below.)

2. Longer term project evaluation

To evaluate the effectiveness of the assessment mission and the assessment report in furthering progress toward democratic elections in the host country, both from the perspective of election preparations and election assistance, it is useful to solicit feedback from the USAID mission, U.S. embassy, or other funder within two to four months after the report has been delivered. One tool for gathering that feedback might be a questionnaire such as the following, to be sent to the U.S. ambassador, DCM, political officer, USAID director, or other appropriate representative of the funding institution. If possible, a similar questionnaire should be sent to an appropriate host country official(s) as well.

1. Briefly, how have election preparations progressed in the host country since the assessment team's visit? (e.g., revision of electoral code, appointment of Electoral Commission, registration of voters, the holding or postponement of scheduled referenda or elections).

2. What further assistance (material, financial, technical) has been provided to the Government's election preparations since of the IFES assessment?

3. How was the IFES Pre-Election Assessment Report used in guiding the Embassy/USAID mission/other funder in providing follow-up assistance?

4. If an external donors' conference was held subsequent to the receipt of the IFES Pre-Election Assessment Report in the host country, how, if at all, was the Report used as an aid to donors' discussions regarding assistance to elections?

5 In general, how would you characterize the response of the host country government to the IFES Report?

6. To your knowledge, was the IFES Report used as a planning tool or a catalyst for discussion and action by government officials responsible for election administration? Did the Report produce any discernible effects on the Government's planning, policy, or procedures related to the election process?

7. How widely distributed was the IFES Report to individuals and groups outside the Government? In general, how would you characterize the response of non-governmental groups and individuals to the Report? What use, if any, did these groups or individuals make of the Report?

8. On a 1-10 scale, how would you evaluate the effectiveness of the assessment team's visit in meeting out the objectives set by the U.S. Embassy/USAID mission/other funder? Explain.

9. On a 1-10 scale, how would you evaluate the effectiveness of the assessment team's visit in meeting out the objectives set by the host country government? Explain.

10. On a 1-10 scale, how would you evaluate the effectiveness of the IFES Assessment Report in addressing the needs and the concerns of the U.S. Embassy? Explain.

11. On a 1-10 scale, how would you evaluate the effectiveness of the IFES Assessment Report in addressing the needs and the concerns of the host country government? Explain.

12. On a 1-10 scale, how would you rate the expertise and the professionalism of the assessment team, as reflected in their work in-country and in their written report?

13. What were the most notable weaknesses of the assessment team? The assessment report?

14. What were the most notable strengths of the assessment team? The assessment report?

15. Do you have any other comments on the IFES Pre-Election Assessment Project in the host country? (regarding, e.g., the length of stay, the timeliness of the visit, etc.)

16. How would you evaluate your dealings with IFES Program Staff in Washington? What recommendations would you make for improvement in the manner in which IFES responds to pre-election assessment request from U.S. Embassies (or USAID missions)?

D. Evaluating project fulfillment of IFES' objectives

IFES implicitly or explicitly sets institutional objectives for each project that it undertakes, including pre-election assessments. At the completion of the project, the relevant IFES staff should gather to review those objectives and to evaluate whether they have been accomplished. Institutional objectives for carrying out a pre-election assessment might include the following:

- to satisfy a request from a funder with whom it is important to maintain or build a good relationship;
- to lay the groundwork for further short- or long-term assistance in the country or for an up-coming observation mission;
- to fulfill in part the IFES annual workplan;
- to generate the revenue that comes from the overhead category in the project budget;
- to provide assessment experience to an IFES staff member or consultant.

An evaluative discussion regarding each project should be convened by the regional Program Director, to include representatives from program staff, financial and administrative staff, and executive staff, to examine how well the project has fulfilled the institutional objectives of IFES. Such discussion should determine whether a project has been profitable, in every sense of the word, to IFES and whether similar projects should continue to be undertaken.