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**AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
BUREAU FOR GLOBAL PROGRAMS, FIELD SUPPORT AND RESEARCH  
CENTER FOR DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE**

**COMPARISON OF THE RUSSIA AND SOUTH AFRICA ELECTION EVALUATIONS**

**PREPARED BY:**

**THUNDER & ASSOCIATES  
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## I. Executive Summary

The following analysis compares the evaluations of USAID's support to the Russia and South Africa elections. These elections occurred in two entirely different contexts and USAID's approach reflected different degrees of urgency. The purpose of this comparison is to highlight the lesson learned and make recommendations that should be considered in the design of the Electoral Support and Political Process Development Program for USAID Global Bureau's Center for Democracy and Governance.

The comparison recommends that: USAID send a message to the U.S. NGOs that its strategic planning must be long term with proposed activities reflecting their relationship to the development of a sustainable democracy. This planning must include better identification of baseline data, goals, specific targets, and evaluations. USAID can send this message, in part, by developing long term grants that support activities in the pre-election, election, and post-election stage. USAID should also support the entry of new organizations in this arena while diversifying the existing contracting mechanisms. Furthermore, in establishing a relationship with the grantees USAID should act as facilitator, increasing their communication and participation. USAID should support early assistance to independent, permanent electoral commissions and ensure nonpartisan implementation of all programs.

The principal materials used for this analysis included evaluations of the democracy programs in the NIS region; the civic education program in South Africa; and the political party development program in South Africa. The NIS democracy program evaluations were utilized because there is no separate evaluation of the Russia election. The NIS materials focused on the program impact, management of the grants and the USAID/U.S. NGO relationship. Whereas, the South Africa evaluations focused on the actual activities carried out by the NGOs. Consequently, comparison of the two is somewhat uneven. But, even in light of the different approaches taken in the evaluations there are several comparisons and conclusions that can be drawn from these documents.

## II. Russia Elections

### A. Findings

#### 1. USAID's Strategic Objectives, Project Activities and Implementing Mechanisms.

Political and Social Process<sup>1</sup> represents an integral component of projects addressing the

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<sup>1</sup> The Political and Social Process specifically addresses the formation of political parties, the electoral process, civic education, federalism and the creation of a network of non-governmental organizations that are capable of aggregating and advocating the interests of diverse societal groups. AID/ENI/NIS. "Democracy Promotion in the NIS Political and Social Process

promotion of democracy. USAID's strategic interests lie in supporting the transition to democracy and the democratic requisites to self-sustaining economic growth. The strategic objectives include establishing: a multi-party political system that permits competition, diversity of view, and opportunities to govern among numerous political factions; free and fair elections as a basis for legitimate government at the national, regional, and local levels; increased public participation, confidence and understanding of the processes of political and governmental decision-making; assistance in the development of self-sustaining indigenous non-governmental organizations that work to enhance civic society and perpetuate democratic values; and enhancement of inter and intra state relations by establishing laws, policies and procedures of federalism.

However, at the time that the U.S. NGOs entered into their original cooperative agreements for assistance in Russia the above AID/ENI/NIS strategic objectives were not concrete or communicated. In fact, the U.S. NGOs were not provided with strategic guidance by the State Department or USAID because there had been no strategic framework or assessments completed for this region. Rather, the Soviet Union had just collapsed and the United States Government saw a window of opportunity. A window in which they wanted to provide assistance to this key country in transition to democracy. And the U.S. NGOs responded.

## 2. Implementing Agents

### a. Political Party Development and Civic Education

The objective of the International Republican Institute's (IRI) project was to foster the development of institutions essential to the success of a democracy with particular focus on grassroots campaign training, political party development and increasing women's role in politics. IRI frequently relied on its local contacts to conduct the initial solicitation for its training programs. The principle methods for delivery training were seminars.

IRI reportedly did an outstanding job in terms of achieving output targets including: the completion of the first round of 10 political communication and campaign preparedness seminars involving approximately 800 party leaders; completing a landmark conference for nearly 200 women with additional conferences planned; organizing and executing a poll-watching and ballot integrity training program; mobilizing a 25 person elections observation delegation; and training a small cadre of indigenous trainers for both future IRI seminar teaching and initiation of indigenous training programs.

Some observers expressed concern that IRI limited its audience to compatible party groups or, by exclusive recruitment practices, to pre-selected reformers or categories of reformers. However, the evaluators' observations indicated a strong commitment on IRI's part to nonpartisanship and positive impact from the program. The cadre of political party leaders trained by IRI represents the principal multiplier of development benefit. Additionally, several participants have been

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DPI Component Strategy." (Draft #3, 12/93).

## **the new Russian Duma and Federation Council.**

The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs' (NDI) election support program was designed to promote confidence and participation in the electoral process and, more important, to assist the development of institutions and organizations that are the foundation of a democratic civil society. NDI carried out this objective with training components in political party development, election monitoring, consultation with Russian television, voter education, legal clinics and election day observing.

Approximately 200 political activists in five cities attended NDI seminars on campaigning; election law consultations were held and several recommendations for change were incorporated into the latest draft of the electoral code.

During the third quarter of 1993, NDI discovered that one important output of its activities was a "sharp increase in requests from parties, expanded participation in NDI programs, and NDI's exponentially expanding contact pool." Additionally, distribution of 10,000 copies of the election preparation manual began during this quarter. And, NDI produced three videotape clips on rights and responsibilities of voters, what happens on election day and procedures for the vote for parliament.

During interviews with training participants, the evaluators found abundant evidence of NDI's impact on the activities of individuals who would describe themselves as political reformers. The evaluation did not address any impact on civic education activities.

### **b. Support to the Central Elections Commission (CEC)**

The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) sent a team to Russia to conduct a technical assessment in June 1993. They identified five areas of concern: ballot security; voting administration, reporting and grievance procedures; poll worker diversity and training; nonpartisan voter education; and electoral technologies. Delivery mechanisms for these activities included consultations on election and civic education related activities, preparation of training manuals and commodities assistance.

Specific IFES outcomes included participation as members of high-level panels for roundtables on election administration and reform; playing an advisory role in helping the CEC develop official voter information posters, as well as, text on marking ballots; providing on-going technical advice on the conduct of the parliamentary elections and the constitutional referendum; leveraging donations by Japan and Canada; providing monitoring functions; acting as liaison for the CEC with foreign press, election observers and other American NGOs; working with *Teachers' Gazette* to educate teachers throughout Russia about the process of elections; and establishing a permanent presence in the CEC offices one month before the election.

IFES succeeded in establishing its credibility before the CEC, enabling the CEC to strengthen electoral procedures in Russia. The IFES team provided input resulting in the development of

regulations and procedures for governing the December 12th elections. Additionally they enhanced vote tabulation by supporting the acquisition of commodities. And, increased voter education by providing information necessary for the development of voter education materials.

### **3. Management**

NGOs sometimes felt that USAID presented a confusing face. The complicated and often untimely approval, authorization, obligation, amendment, contacting, and country clearance procedures boggle the minds of uninitiated NGO managers. The NGOs were concerned about mixed signals on policy guidance, shifting emphasis and priorities, and redundant reviews and reports.

USAID officials in the field and Washington were faced with heavy workloads which precluded regular monitoring visits and forced them to rely on written reports as substitutes for personal observations. These officials expressed some exasperation with the uneven reporting and feedback, lack of timely requests and bureaucratic end-runs.

One example where USAID took initiative enabling IFES to be more responsive to their needs and strategic objectives was in rewriting their cooperative agreement. The new approach focuses on the function rather than the country. According to the USAID Project Officer, this approach gives IFES greater ability to respond to sudden changes in NIS country election time frames and eliminates the need for frequent reprogramming of funds.

## **2. CONCLUSIONS**

### **1. Lessons Learned**

It can be concluded that during an intense three month period these grantees were able to demonstrate their ability to contribute to: a multi-party political system that was more open to competition, diversity of view and opportunities to govern among numerous political factions; establishing freer and fairer elections; and increasing public participation, confidence and understanding of the processes of political decision-making.

This is not to suggest that there were no problems. There were problems and lessons learned including:

First, since the U.S. NGOs were responding to the need for quick help the result was quick planning. The U.S. NGOs efficiently got in the field and produced high quality assessments. However, their findings were not incorporated into long term planning. Rather, the proposals focused on one event, the election. Proper baseline data, specific indicators, targets, and evaluation criteria were not established prior to the grant of the cooperative agreements.

Second, the perception of nonpartisanship may be influenced by the approach to and method of training. IRI's use of local contacts to conduct the initial solicitations for training programs may

have effected its reputation as nonpartisan. Local contacts may tend to limit their solicitations to like minded groups. As a consequence, the initial respondents may not exhibit diverse political backgrounds and consequently the perception of the NGO's nonpartisan approach may be diminished, regardless of how nonpartisan their activities are.

Third, establishing a rapport with the CEC was a prerequisite to working effectively with them. This rapport was built over time, through direct personal contact. Furthermore, the CEC's need for assistance does not stop at the point of the election, it extends to implementation of the lessons learned from the election and support for regional and local elections.

Fourth, in a situation where USAID is not able to sufficiently keep up with the activities of the NGOs their ability to properly manage the assistance programs may be in jeopardy.

## 2. Recommendations

- a. Having weathered the crisis, the U.S. NGOs should move toward long term strategic planning, consistent with the current strategic objectives of the Mission and Embassy. This includes establishing a presence in-country with sufficient staffing and focusing on longer term goals that support sustainable development.
- b. Initial offers for political party development assistance should be communicated to the spectrum of qualified political parties to avoid any appearance of partisanship.
- c. Attention should be provided early to assist in the codification of electoral laws. Fluid laws in the later stage of the elections will adversely effect political party and civic education training, in addition to assistance to any central election commission.
- d. IFES should maintain a permanent in-country presence when working with central election commissions. USAID should support that relationship until the central election commission is able to stand alone. This requires longer term cooperative agreements that provide for post-electoral assistance to support the implementation of lessons learned and the administration of regional and local elections.
- e. USAID should consider developing multi-year cooperative agreements which would allow the U.S. NGOs to engage in long term planning and staffing. USAID should also consider using the functional versus the geographical approach in cooperative agreements which has afforded IFES additional flexibility.
- f. USAID should focus on working as a facilitator. In undertaking this function, it should work to inform the U.S. NGOs of its strategic objectives, goals and changes in them so there is a full understanding of what is expected from all parties involved. In working as a facilitator the field staff should also make a better effort of visiting NGO sites and attending workshops, etc.
- g. Specific objectives and targets should be identified for the activities using goals based on the

time frame involved. Monitoring and evaluation systems should be designed and implemented by all grantees. And, a user friendly format for quarterly reports should be developed that is uniform, concise and widely distributed to become a development tool in various geographical regions.

### III. South Africa

#### A. Findings

##### 1. USAID's Strategic Objectives, Project Activities and Implementing Mechanisms.

United States aid to South Africa originates in the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act (CAAA) of 1986 in which the Congress outlined the main objective of the USAID program in South Africa as: to hasten the demise of apartheid and to prepared disadvantaged South Africans for leadership roles in a democratic, post-apartheid South Africa. Given the strong guidance from Washington, the Mission set out its strategy in the USAID/South Africa Strategy Concept Paper in March of 1987. This strategic paper was written after two retreats with high-level Embassy and AID/W representatives followed by a series of formal roundtables with key South Africans involved in USAID's major areas of activity.

Before defining their goal and strategic objectives the Mission established five guidelines requiring that any strategy adopted must: 1. be defensible from a developmental standpoint, emphasizing more traditional development issues such as economic impact, sustainability and institution-building; 2. be operationally feasible within the staffing and other constraints imposed on the Mission; 3. be directly responsive to Congressional concerns; 4. be flexible enough to allow rapid response to unpredictable direction and pace of change without having to be rewritten within a few months; and 5. offer something lasting and positive to the process of political and economic restructuring now underway.

The Mission developed a sub-goal statement which fully captures the Congressional intent in establishing a unique USAID presence in South Africa: to increase the political, economic and social empowerment of South Africa's disadvantaged majority. It furthered stated its strategic objective for Political Empowerment: Majority population participates more fully in the political development and governance of a democratic, human rights-based South Africa. The policy further sets out four targets, one applying to elections assistance being simply to: Help prepare for free and fair elections. Two aspects were planned for this initiative, voter education, seeking to provide an enabling environment for elections and monitoring, working to ensure legitimacy. Political party development was not mentioned at this juncture.

##### 2. Implementing Agents

###### a. Voter Education

###### i. Project Vote Activities

NDI was initially working in South Africa with the Centre for Development Studies (CDS) at the University of Western Cape under a National Endowment for Democracy (NED) grant conducting a series of voter education workshops in November of 1991. The project initiated under this funding was called Project Vote. According to NDI, the U.S. Ambassador to South Africa became aware of the program and expressed a strong interest in having NDI conduct a more comprehensive program.

NDI entered into its original contract for assistance with the USAID/South Africa Mission in June of 1992. The proposal, a continuation of Project Vote, was:

[T]o create an understanding of democratic electoral processes and participation in future democratic elections in South Africa. The essence of the project is to produce and broadly distribute materials that will educate the black majority in rural areas about the election process. The project incorporates a nonpartisan training program for local activists in civic, church, political and labor organizations which will enable them to educate their local constituencies about elections.

The Project Vote Team provided assistance in three areas: research and development, production and design of materials, and training and distribution of materials. Their main vehicles for program implementation were workshops and focus groups.

The outcomes include: a series of education workshops, in eight locations across South Africa, designed to test the relevance and utility of materials and message to a target audience and to assess the outreach capacity of the workshops; a study to provide a basis for the style and content of the voter education materials; a creative workshop to allow South Africans to set a directional tone for the development of voter education materials; production of materials including a tabloid, posters, videos, training manuals, election kits, mock ballot papers, pamphlets, and posters; follow-up workshops to train activists to use these materials; and establishment of a clearinghouse to distribute the materials.

The impact of the Project Vote was substantial. The Project vote team was able to determine that they needed to reach disenfranchised voters with a motivational, as well as educational component. And that the best method was on the ground people teaching people. Given this approach they further ensured the cultural appropriateness of the materials by integrating South Africans in the process and continually updating their materials to incorporate new information. The method of training trainers and distribution of the materials allowed them to reach people across the political spectrum through church groups, civic groups and trade unions. Their positive impact is reflected in the high voter turnout, which indicates motivation. But, even more telling, was the low number of problems with ballots which indicated that the voters knew how to vote. A truly impressive result considering that approximately 70% of the target group was voting for its first time. Not only did the Project Vote team fulfill their objectives, they also contributed towards the Mission's objectives of having fair and free elections.

## ii. Project Vote Management

It was noted that the CDS/NDI partnership reflected a working, cooperative relationship with healthy tension. However, CDS wanted a clearer understanding of the objectives and programs of USAID grants and what was expected from them, particularly with regard to evaluation. The staff would have welcomed greater interest in its activities, such as USAID attendance at programs and informal feedback on Project Vote.

#### b. Political Party Development

On June 23, 1993 NDI, IRI and the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies (JCPES) proposed to undertake a comprehensive year long program of assistance in the development of political organization which are competing for the first time in multi-party elections. The objective of this program, as set out in the proposal was:

[T]o enhance, on a nonpartisan and impartial basis, the capability of democratic political organizations to effectively identify and educate voters, to enable these organizations to compete responsibly in South Africa's first democratic elections and to encourage confidence in the political institutions by the previously disenfranchised population.

NDI IRI proposed to conduct a joint program which stressed the procedures and skills needed for effectively communicating with voters and maximizing participation in the first democratic election. Special attention was to be focused on the women's and youth vote. JCPES, along with the Institute for Multi-Party Democracy (MPD) would focus on the organization and orchestration of party forum roundtables for the political parties. The purpose of the forums was to provide a neutral setting where the parties could discuss important issues related to participation in the election and the peaceful management of political conflicts. And lastly, NDI and IRI proposed to commission a national poll which was to "establish a benchmark of attitudes among potential voters in South Africa in order for workers in the political parties, as well as the Project, to understand the political environment in which election preparations are being conducted." The poll was to be used as a teaching tool to illustrate to the political parties how survey data can be used in developing campaign strategy.

#### i. Political Party Training

According to the evaluation, the U.S. policy was to provide political party training by a team consisting of both IRI and NDI representatives to all parties qualifying for assistance. This relationship was referred to as bipartisan training.<sup>2</sup> The four parties that qualified and participated

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<sup>2</sup> The definition of the term bipartisan is "consisting of or supported by members of two political parties." ( Webster's II: The Riverside Publishing Company, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1984). However, for the purpose of this paper the term is used as defined in the scope of work for the assistance and as applied in the evaluation. Namely, "all activities conducted under this Agreement will be bipartisan (i.e. Democratic and Republican) in nature."

for assistance were the African National Congress (ANC), the Azanian Peoples Organization (AZAPO), the Inkata Freedom Party (IFP), and the Pan African Congress (PAC). The most common complaint was that the trainers were not available for as much time as the parties would have liked. Three of the four parties also noted that, although a needs assessment was conducted, they did not feel as though the training was customized for each political party, as was indicated in the planning documents.

One area of discussion was the bipartisan approach to training. The ANC training was only conducted by NDL. More than one IRI representative believed that the ANC would not accept assistance on philosophical grounds. However, ANC representatives stated that they had no philosophical issue with IRI. Rather, they stressed that the ANC required a single source of assistance so that there would be consistency in the advice given. They believed that "an unequivocal source of advice was imperative."

One other example in the breakdown of bipartisan representation was exhibited in the assistance to AZAPO. After an initial program of training NDI terminated its assistance with the organization. One NDI official explained that NDI had devoted three years to advocating voter participation and could not help an organization that actively boycotted the election. Thus, this was clearly at odds with the program rationale and unacceptable. It is interesting to note that both IRI and NDI provided assistance to the IFP, despite the fact that they were also boycotting the election.

The impact of the political party training is reflected by its ratings as the most important and successful component by all parties. All parties express an interest in continued training. Furthermore, the political parties responsible competition on the election and their confidence in the political institutions was evidenced by the low levels of violence and the acceptance of the election results.

#### ii. Electoral Law Consultations

The electoral law consultations was a late addition to the training. It consisted of a workshop and consultations in March and April to provide all interested parties specific information about the law and its implementing regulations. However, by the time the training took place the parties main concern was their campaign.

The consultations had little impact. As it turned out, the election was carried out with few problems, less violence and more widely accepted results than many predicted. Thus the electoral consultation proved not to have been as necessary as they might have been.

#### iii. Opinion Polls

The opinion poll was conducted and available to all political parties. It was fairly general in nature and did not include questions about specific parties or candidates. It received little praise by the party officials interviewed, except for the PAC, who learned a great deal from the poll and did utilize the results. The larger parties, ANC and IFP, had prior experience of either conducting

their own polls or using other poll data for planning purposes. Consequently, for them the generalized teaching value was said to be unimportant, and their representatives reported that the poll results told them nothing new. AZAPO had no prior experience with survey research, but was skeptical of the methodology and thought the results were interesting but not usable.

In assessing whether the poll achieved its goal it depends on how you measure its impact. According to the evaluator, there was a general consensus that the poll was an effective component of the project. However, it does not appear to have been used as an effective teaching tool. Arguably, it was not culturally appropriate for the ANC and IFP who already had this information; nor for AZAPO, who was not interested in using the information. Yet, it did achieve its goal with PAC. And may have achieved its goal with some of the twenty-three parties not receiving political party training under the program.

#### iv. Party Forums

Party forums were the final activity under the assistance project. The JCPES held three forums: "Polling and Campaign Organizations in Democratic Elections" held in November of 1993; "Competition and Opposition Politics in Democratic Elections" held in January 1994; and "Safeguarding Free and Fair Elections" held in March of 1994.

Smaller parties reportedly found the forums more useful than larger parties. None of the political party officials interviewed for this evaluation believed the forums to have been particularly useful. Many thought the forums a waste of time, noting that the timing was too close to the election, the content was not of sufficient priority and there was unrealistic hope that the parties would find common ground. The political officers went on to comment that they did not feel that the original consultation on topics was sufficient.

The JCPES personnel, on the other hand, felt that they were very successful in achieving their goals. Virtually all parties chose to participate, speakers were gender balanced and women's and youth groups were targeted in some presentations. Furthermore, in some sessions the participants showed a sense of common purpose. This feeling was confirmed in the written evaluations received by the forum participants, although the percentage of participants completing the survey was low.

Another complaint arose regarding the cultural appropriateness of the materials composed for the workshop. The materials prepared for the forums struck many participants as too voluminous to be useful, too academic or sophisticated for many of the participants and a few thought that the materials were not particularly relevant to the issues that were raised at the forum. There was no evidence that the JCPES' research capacity was utilized to produce analyses of the South African context. Furthermore, the JCPES commissioned five paper for the forums. However, none of the papers were available for the actual events. And only one paper had been produced as of the date of the evaluation.

#### C. Support to the Independent Electoral Commission

The Independent Electoral Commission was created in October and began working in January of 1994. After a series of complex negotiations, IFES arrived in March just a short time before the April elections. IFES quickly assembled a team of thirteen international and South African technical consultants working in the areas of election administration logistics, information technology, election monitoring logistics, telecommunications, poll worker training and election management and information management. Do to their late arrival they were not able to participate in the initial phase of the election planning.

However, there are innumerable specific outcomes as a result of their assistance. IFES activities included design, implementation and management in all aspects of election administration, from vote counting to disaster planning. On the election monitoring side an IFES consultant coordinated and edited the monitoring reports from around the nation for local and international observers. And developed and distributed a final evaluation questionnaire.

Although there was no evaluation completed on the IFES activities, it is clear that they had a direct impact on contributing to smoother administration of the election. However, in almost every activity, the staff noted that there was not sufficient time to fully carry out their activities. In addition, there were many problems in the actual administration of the election.

## B. CONCLUSIONS

The assistance provided in South Africa did help prepare for freer and fairer elections. Project Vote aided in providing an enabling environment and the election, although plagued with administrative problems, was legitimate.

### 1. Lessons Learned

a. The success and extent of the voter education program was the result of its early start and the successful integration of a local NGO, with training experience and community development skills, with an international NGO, with international election and management skills. However, when working with NGOs, USAID needs to do a better job of communicating its goals and requirements.

b. As the evaluator points out " bipartisan political party training may seem an appropriate measure to the U.S. parties, but be of no interest to local parties." The evaluators went on to note that, "USAID appears to have recognized that, although a single team of consultants may not be bipartisan, it can provide nonpartisan training. " Thus, the issue of when and if training teams consisting of representatives from IRI and NDI are needed should be considered when planning assistance. Another issue to consider is whether there could be a conflict of interest in having an organization provide voter education and political party development training. As we saw with NDI's work, there may be conflicting objectives.

In several instances the U.S. NGOs thought they had adequately integrated the host country

nationals in the planning process. Yet, the host country nationals did not feel their voice was adequately reflected. This was seen in the political party training, the opinion poll and the multiparty forums. This exhibits the need for a better method of indicating the cultural appropriateness of materials at the needs assessment stage. In addition, the sample materials should be tested in country before large scale publication begins.

d. The election law consultations and multiparty forums seemed to have had the least impact. However, this may have been influenced by the timing of the event and not just the events themselves. In the future, this element should be evaluated before a decision is made to carry out the activity. On the other hand, the election law consultations were a low cost element that could be viewed as an insurance policy. If the process had broken down, the consultations may have been viewed as essential in providing the knowledge for legal and nonviolent means for resolving issues and keeping the program on track.

e. Work with a central election commission needs to be done early for maximum effectiveness. Regardless of how good the U.S. NGOs are, the impact will be severely undermined if there is not ample time for implementation of the program.

#### **2. Recommendations**

a. Continue to utilize counterpart relationships like Project Vote to carry out successful long term voter education campaigns.

b. Increase the host country participants input all aspects of political party training. When possible test materials on groups, as was done in Project Vote, to ensure their cultural appropriateness.

c. When determining whether to undertake a project place greater emphasis on how close the activity will be to the election. Activities scheduled too close to the election will have lower participation and impact levels.

d. Work as early as possible with central election commissions. Support their efforts to be an independent and permanent body.

### **IV. Comparison of the Russia and South Africa Elections**

#### **A. Lessons Learned**

At first glance the elections in Russia and South Africa seemed very different. But, a closer look reveals many similarities. In both countries assistance is strongly motivated by our foreign policy. They are also both highly visible countries in the transition to democracy. In Russia, you have the USAID Mission in Washington and greatly influenced by the Department of State. In South Africa you have a Mission whose assistance parameters were actually established by the Congress.

Both missions also identified free and fair elections as a goal in their strategy to support the

transition to democracy. However, in Russia no policy guidance was communicated to the U.S. NGOs. And, in South Africa the policy guidance was very general and did not explicitly set out guidelines for achieving its objectives. Consequently, the U.S. NGOs were probably driven more by their own internal policies and goals, which may be shorter term, rather than those of USAID.

A quick glance may also lead to the conclusion that Russia was an example of a rapid response activity, whereas, South Africa encapsulated long term planning. Nevertheless, closer scrutiny reveals that neither country was an example of long term strategic planning.

The Russia elections set for December of 1993 were not called until September of that year. This severely shortened the time frame for IFES to effectively work with the CEC. IFES had conducted an assessment in June and had consultants working in country on temporary duty assignments. However, they were not able to establish themselves in the offices of the CEC until 1 month before the election. In the case of IRI and NDI they were already engaged in other training activities and had to revamp their approaches and quickly redeploy resources to respond in short order to the election.

A similar trend was seen in South Africa. The date for the elections had been negotiated in July of the previous year. Yet, there was uncertainty until the last minute on whether the negotiated transition and election would take place. The Independent Electoral Commission, established in October, did not begin work until January of 1994. IFES arrived to help them in March, again only a month prior to the elections.

In both countries, IFES' work was highly regarded and influenced the election administration. However, the potential impact of IFES' efforts could not have been realized because many projects were not, or not fully, implemented in the limited time of IFES' permanent presence in the country.

The trend actually extends beyond IFES in South Africa. Looking at the activities, with reportedly the least impact, almost all of them took place in the later part of the election cycle. In March multiparty forums and election law consultations were held with little participation from the large political parties. It is worth noting that this was not simply the fault of the NGOs in scheduling the events late. The election law was still changing in the months before the elections. Nevertheless, it was foreseeable that the main emphasis of the political parties at that time would be campaigning, not training.

South Africa also presents the example of the most adequately timed and planned activity in Project Vote. It seems as though Project Vote was able to carry out all of its objectives. It successfully "created an understanding of democratic electoral processes and participation in the elections; broadly distributed materials that educated the black majority in rural areas about the election process; and incorporated a nonpartisan training program for local activists in civic, church, political and labor organizations enabling them to educate their local constituencies about elections." All of these activities are related in one way or another to timing. There was time to identify the needs of the electorate, time to test the materials, time to go back and integrate

comments from South Africans into the materials and time to allow for the training of trainers program to reach the rural areas.

However, the issue of timing extends beyond this analysis and may be one key to understanding the U.S. NGOs' planning process and its impact on sustainable development. The U.S. NGOs did not approach the assistance in Russia or South Africa from a developmental perspective. Rather, all activities appear to be focused on one event, the national election. This is clearly evidenced in their proposals. Furthermore, it is perpetuated by USAID since all of the original cooperative agreements would have expired before any post-electoral assistance could have started. In fact, none of the original agreements even addressed post-electoral assistance.

The longer term goal of USAID is to support the transition to democracy. This requires long term planning on the part of the U.S. NGOs. It requires planning pre-election, election and post-election activities and analyzing their relationship to the overall transition to democracy. However, this can not be reflected in a cooperative agreement with the duration of one year. And, in the face of one year cooperative agreements, it is not surprising that the U.S. NGOs are not approaching assistance with long term strategic plans.

Furthermore, USAID seems virtually dependant on these three NGOs for their electoral support and political process assistance. It may be time for USAID to explore additional organizations that bring a more "developmental" view to the arena. The use of nonpartisan think tanks, universities, foundations, etc. may provide additional avenues for assistance while increasing everyone's awareness to long term approaches to democratization.

Limiting itself, mainly, to the above U.S. NGOs has also limited USAID's ability to manage electoral support and political process development projects. All the U.S. NGOs are working under cooperative agreements. Cooperative agreements, while being easier to manage, provide less control which may not always be suitable. Using a more diverse group of assistance providers may also provide a more diverse group of procurement mechanisms and result in added flexibility for the missions. Nevertheless, regardless of the organizations involved, USAID should take a more proactive role in the projects. They should work as a facilitator, increasing the communication lines and participating in more of the NGO sponsored activities.

And finally, there are also lessons to be learned with regard to political party training. In Russia IRI was trying to provide nonpartisan training, but the method they used to recruit participants was viewed as partisan in nature. In South Africa, U.S. policy was to provide all political parties with a training team with representatives from IRI and NDL. However, the South African participants, in at least one case, felt that one NGO was sufficient. Thus, the issue arises as to whether concurrent training by both organizations correlates to nonpartisan training. It appears that the method used for the training, and not the political affiliation of the trainer is the determinative factor. Additional consideration should also be given to the issue of whether there may be a conflict of interest when an NGO providing civic education also provides political party development training. In South Africa, NDI's affiliation with Project Vote clearly influenced their ability to provide training to all the qualified political parties.

## **B. Recommendations**

Based solely on the comparable findings the following recommendations should be taken into consideration in providing electoral support and political process development assistance.

1. Projects should be long term, reflecting their relationship to the transition to democracy. Programs like Project Vote should be used as a model for individual activities. When long term planning is not feasible, the goals and objectives of the assistance should be adjusted accordingly to reflect the correlation with the time available for and likely impact of the assistance. Avoid delusion and disillusionment by setting realistic targets for short term quick response activities.
2. Work with the electoral commission should begin early and support should be given for independent and permanent bodies.
3. Political party development should be implemented in a nonpartisan manner, but not necessarily provided by USAID and NDI concurrently.
4. USAID should strive to increase the number of organizations working in electoral support and political process development assistance.
5. USAID should strive to increase the types of contracting mechanisms currently implemented in electoral support and political process development assistance.
6. USAID should provide clearer guidelines and policy objectives, including better guidance on what is required in proposals for identification of baseline data, goals, targets and evaluation.
7. USAID should act as a facilitator to NGOs increasing their attendance at programs and the communication with the NGOs.