

**Elections and Conflict: An Issues Paper
December 5, 2001**

**By Michele Schimpp & Aud Frances McKernan
Elections & Political Processes Division
DCHA/DG**

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I. Summary:

Conflict prevention requires particular attention in terms of election and political party assistance programs. As events where the competition for power is at stake, elections may catalyze conflict rather than prevent it, particularly in cases where there is a disproportionate access to power coupled with impunity and weak justice systems. This paper is intended to shed light on the relationship between elections, political party assistance and conflict, and to outline issues that USAID should consider in current and future programming. Our hope is that it may stimulate broad discussion within USAID, as well as with our implementing partners, and academics.

The paper first describes the nature of the “problem” -- how conflict influences elections and vice versa and the implications for ongoing programs.

The second section reviews past approaches used to prevent or address conflict during elections, noting that many of the existing election interventions can and do work to mitigate or prevent conflict.

The third section suggests other approaches to addressing conflict during elections that are not currently the norm in pre-election planning, but that should be considered in the future. Potential election-related activities include: macro-level, public diplomatic interventions to set criteria for fair play surrounding elections coupled with sanctions for gross violations, helping the media to provide quality and responsible reporting; monitoring conflict extensively; training conflict prone segments of society on non-violence; enhancing policy community relations; and where necessary, providing safehavens.

Finally, the paper identifies next steps for responsible parties at USAID.

II. Understanding the Problem

By definition, free and fair elections are competitive events with unpredictable outcomes, and confrontation is inherent to the process. Elections undergird the democratic process, are remarkably high profile and vulnerable to manipulation, and yet critical to government legitimacy. The key question in conflict-vulnerable societies is whether elections are more likely to *exacerbate* or to *prevent* widespread, destabilizing violence.

Existing academic literature is voluminous and no clear picture emerges as to when, where, and under what circumstances elections make matters better or worse. People commonly point to Haiti, Burundi, Rwanda, Angola and Zimbabwe when linking elections and conflict. However, a quick look at the last decade of USAID election assistance in over 70 countries shows that widespread violence during internationally-assisted elections may not be as common as once might expect. Many countries once at risk of or emerging from conflict, such as Nicaragua, El Salvador, Mozambique, Peru, Serbia, Russia, Indonesia and South Africa, made peaceful democratic transitions through USAID-assisted election processes. More systematic analysis, nevertheless, is clearly in order.

Even if one finds that genuine elections more frequently prevent than cause conflict, there is still a very real risk of elections exacerbating conflict in a number of conflict-vulnerable societies meriting USAID concern. Of the 20-30 countries now receiving

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election assistance, at least six – Sri Lanka, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Albania and Kenya -- are either already involved in or considered at high risk for violent conflict.

A critical first task is to decide where elections might trigger violent conflict -- be it civil war, armed overthrow of an authoritarian leader who manipulates the process, killing or intimidation of party activists and candidates, or even precinct-oriented violence surrounding the election process -- and identify means to reduce the risk of conflict in these countries and these situations. USAID should take a short and long term approach at assessing likelihood of conflict. On the short-term perspective, there are clear indicators of election-related violence, such as intimidation of candidates, party-linked violence, systematic exclusion of groups from the process, etc. Here, any assistance should be directly linked to mitigating these tendencies. With regard to a longer-term view, we know that there are differences as well as commonalities across countries in terms of risk for violent conflict. The Agency must work towards a comprehensive understanding of the risk, building on both academic theory and lessons from experience.

An assessment of conflict risk in Nigeria has indicated that some areas are more prone to violence than others and that there are extreme differences of view in these areas. Our election-related programming there is suggesting ways to counter the potential flare up of election violence through complementary activities like consensus-building in these high-risk geographic regions. Similarly, lessons from places like Angola and Haiti, highlighting the importance of scheduling but waiting to hold elections until demobilization are complete and there is consensus on the rules of the game, have been applied in other settings, whether Bosnia, Kosovo, or Sierra Leone. But these are simply nascent efforts to get a handle on the extremely complex interaction between conflict and political processes – greater and more systematic attention is clearly in order.

Resources, too, are an issue. Election assistance is but a small portion of the resources needed for a full program aimed at mitigation and prevention in upcoming conflict-prone elections. Election assistance comprises only a small portion of the USAID budget. Figure 1 below shows that the \$45,000,000 that was provided in support of electoral processes in 2001 represents less than 10 percent of USAID's total democracy assistance. A large portion of this assistance went to only a small number of countries; two-thirds of this budget went to only four countries: \$10 million to Peru, \$6 million to Nicaragua, \$8 million to Indonesia, and \$5.5 million to Bosnia. A meaningful conflict mitigation or

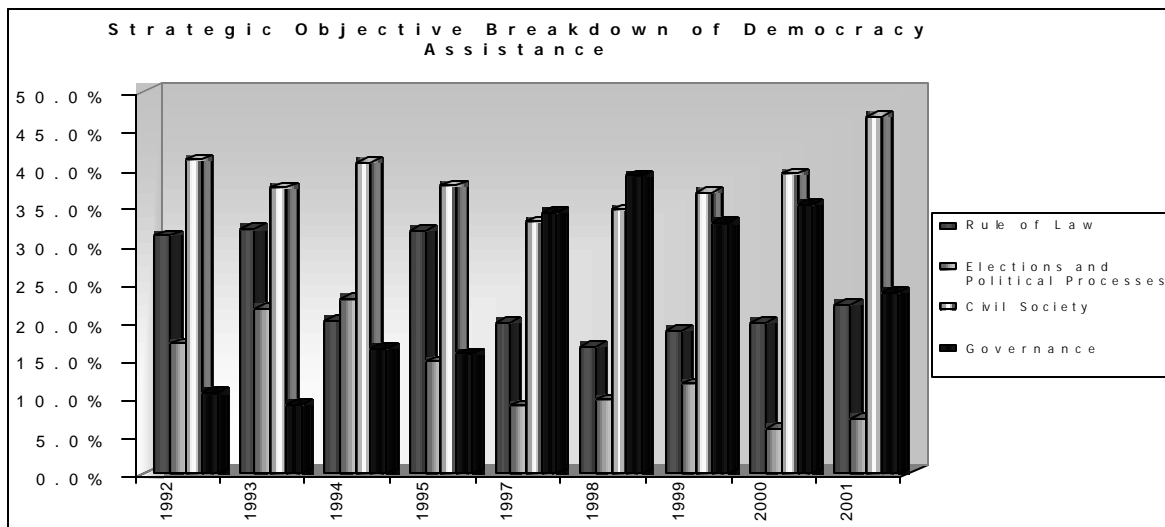
prevention strategy, particularly where aimed at preventing civil war or a popular revolution, must encompass a broad set of potential interventions well beyond election assistance, and a broader set of expertise than is currently employed.

III. Past Approaches to Prevent or Manage Conflict in Elections

Assuming the decision to provide election assistance is made, it is useful to understand the approaches and limits of past attempts to prevent or manage conflict during elections. USAID presently has an existing "tool kit" to assist elections, and examining these approaches through a conflict lens enables us to identify how to refine our strategy to prevent electoral violence. Most election assistance to date has had a rather narrow

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focus on conflict primarily as a security issue around polling stations and has generally lacked systematic and in-depth attention.



A recent draft study by Sharon Morris entitled “A Framework for Conflict Analysis” identifies four sets of explanatory factors that need to be examined in determining whether the conflict that is present in any society becomes organized and deadly: 1) grievance and greed; 2) access to conflict resources; 3) weak state capacity to manage conflict; and 4) regional and international support. To understand how USAID has attempted in the past to address conflict, it is useful to examine the main types of election assistance provided in the past as they relate to these four explanatory factors.

A. Grievance and Greed

Elections are often the venue where grievance and greed are on the table. In competing, political parties survive by exploiting societal divisions. Political competition at all levels is often as much about the control of important economic and environmental resources as it is about ideologies, policies and programs.

Some of USAID’s election assistance activities directly relate to managing issues of grievance and greed, so that the election serves to resolve these issues peacefully rather than leads to violence.

1. Developing the Electoral Framework – Reaching agreement on how to structure the electoral process – via the Constitution, laws, regulations and implementing institutions - - is one of the basic building blocks for a society to manage successfully its conflicts into the future. USAID is often engaged in helping to design or reform the electoral framework, and in building consensus among elites and between the elite and the electorate overall (e.g. Macedonia, Ukraine) so that the framework is considered legitimate.

One issue to consider in the future is whether certain types of electoral frameworks are better or worse for managing conflict in polarized societies. There is a lack of consensus on whether proportional representation (multiple representatives elected according to the

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proportion of the vote received) is better than majoritarian/plurality systems (single representative elected for having received a plurality or majority) in managing conflict (Sisk 1998, Reynolds, 1998). Political science does not provide a clear understanding of this issue and USAID is unable to assure that our work in developing electoral frameworks is sufficiently sensitive to conflict in this regard. Assistance in developing electoral frameworks commonly involves presenting decision-makers in host countries with models from different countries, and facilitating discussion and improved understanding of the pros and cons inherent in any electoral framework. However, intervening in selecting an electoral system would be a major incursion into the internal affairs of a country. Thus, a decision to promote proportional representation over plurality, for example, would be a major policy shift and would require strong and convincing empirical evidence that one system is clearly superior to the other in terms of conflict mitigation. Given the preponderance of evidence that would be required to intervene on this question, a quick review of the evidence by USAID should be sufficient to examine whether we should focus on this variable as an election-related conflict variable.

Some academics point to other structural alternatives for managing conflict, including federalism, ethnic partitioning, power-sharing cross-ethnic alliances (Lijphart 1977, Horowitz 1993, Snyder 2000, Hirschhoff 1991, Maynes 1993). Given the highly sensitive nature of taking positions on such sensitive internal matters, the implications for USAID engagement on proposing any such system would also require careful examination and compelling evidence.

Electoral frameworks can respond to concern over conflict in smaller ways as well. The means for adjudicating electoral disputes, for example, can be key to preventing widespread conflict. In South Africa an international electoral dispute tribunal was established to assure all parties that a fair and impartial arbiter would be available to quickly handle disputes related to party and voter registration, campaign environment irregularities, voting procedures and counting and determination of winners.

2. Political Party Development. How and how well political parties organize, aggregate and articulate citizen interests influences whether greed and grievances will result in violent conflict. Weak political parties may resort to easy modes for mobilizing voters and sustaining their support – for example by exploiting the issues of grievance and greed that make societies vulnerable to conflict (Mansfield & Snyder 1995). Stronger parties, with well-established bases, have the potential to develop programmatic rather than ethnically or religious based platforms. South Africa provides a good example of how USAID assistance made a difference in helping the ANC in 1994 to develop a program rather than race-based campaign. Similarly, USAID assistance in Bosnia to parties organized on issues rather than ethnicity helped broaden competition and representation and these parties assisted by USAID now serve as one vehicle to mitigate future conflict along ethnic lines.

The conduct of political parties during the campaign period has been positively influenced with donor support. Getting parties and candidates to agree to adhere to codes of conduct and non-violence pledges has deterred violence in places like Senegal, Lesotho and Cambodia. Dialogues may be organized so that leaders who do not usually communicate can air concerns and voice grievances in a mediated setting, as recently seen in Bangladesh. Party pollwatcher programs such as those carried out

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in Nicaragua in 2001 can help give competitors their own source of information on key election events (e.g. registration, election day).

One issue that arises in political party assistance in post conflict settings is that *political parties are often closely tied with armed political groups*. De-mobilization programs for former combatants are important but probably not sufficient to de-link party action and militia activity; USAID needs to exercise caution to assure that political parties receiving assistance are not linked to militia-based violence.

Another issue is that *political party assistance, when used to favor a single party over other democratic contenders, may exacerbate conflict*. An external actor, whether the United States or another foreign government, that appears to be providing resources to assure the electoral victory of one democratic candidate over the other democratic candidates is undermining the legitimacy of the electoral process as the means for peaceful conflict resolution and political competition. Of course the U.S. and other countries have often supported democratic forces in their fight against authoritarian oppression, communism and non-democratic parties and our core values will guide us to continue to provide this type of support since it is a primary tool for helping to promote human rights and overcome oppression; we recognize that such support sometimes exacerbates conflict in the short-term, but as democracy gains a foothold we expect that it will mitigate conflict in the longer term. For this and other reasons, USAID guidance is that assistance should be provided on an equitable basis to democratic (and only democratic) political parties.

3. Voter Education and Participation of Disadvantaged Groups. If voters are poorly informed and/or discouraged from voting, the ability of elections to resolve or mitigate conflict may be undermined. Low turnout might mean that the results do not reflect the views of important segments of the population, leading to a government that does not have a mandate from the majority of citizens. Poorly informed voters may not know enough about the candidates or their platforms and instead are more likely to vote on the basis of ethnic, religious, or other divisions. Misinformation campaigns may stir up and exacerbate conflict.

In countries where violence is anticipated, voter education programs often highlight the importance of peaceful participation and non-violence. Where voters fear for their security on election day, information on security measures being taken, and secrecy of the ballot often form part of an awareness campaign (e.g. Nicaragua, Bosnia).

Voter education and get-out-the-vote campaigns, if well designed and implemented, are generally effective in achieving behavioral change. As recently noted in USAID's "Approaches to Civic Education: Lessons Learned", clear and focused messages when combined with the opportunity to apply newly learnt information are effective programs in enhancing democratic behaviors and attitudes. Moreover, voter education can help counter mis- and dis-information campaigns.

Often, programs work to increase the participation of ethnic minorities or rural groups that may be historically excluded from the political process. Encouraging civic involvement, facilitating participation, enhancing security, and improving access to polling booths, are among the types of activities that can help bring conflicting parties into a peaceful electoral process, although if those in power perceive that these groups

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may sway the power away from them then these programs may equally increase the possibility of exclusionary acts by those in power and thus the likelihood of conflict.

B. Access to Conflict Resources

Research by Paul Collier at the World Bank highlights that access to conflict resources is one of the most significant determinants of whether greed and grievance turn to widespread, violent conflict.

Election and political party assistance programs have little influence over the access to conflict resources, although indirectly those who support particular parties may direct their resources and support toward supplying arms or supporting militias to maintain or win power. Nevertheless, it is essential to highlight that political contenders need to have first laid down arms for the election to be successful. As noted in USAID's "Bullets to Ballots"

Significant progress toward demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants [is critical]. In highly polarized societies, progress in this area is necessary to ensure that the losing party will not be able to resume military hostilities in the face of an electoral defeat. Here too, strong international peace-enforcing mechanisms could be a substitute in theory, but probably not in practice. (p. 48)

In post-conflict situations, the presence of international peacekeepers can be key. Frequently, their mandate is to ensure a peaceful electoral process: in the pre-election period for fair registration and competitive campaigning; on election day for the balloting and vote count; and, in the post election period to assure that political contenders do not resort to violence to contest a process they failed to win. But the mandate of peacekeepers may need to be re-evaluated if they are to fully carry out these roles. As long as their mandate is to protect the provision of aid and they do not have a mandate to enforce laws and human rights, then their contribution is less than optimal.

C. State Capacity

Analyses of conflict point to the importance of state capacity to effectively manage or contain tensions. Administering an election requires institutions capable of managing the conflicts that arise in the process of electoral competition and containing violent behavior. As a result, a great deal of election assistance helps to reinforce the capacity of the state to manage a peaceful and competitive process, and to deliver results that are perceived as legitimate and are therefore respected.

1. *Electoral Administration* – The State entrusts the administration of an election to a particular election authority within government. Whether this institution is a fair and impartial manager and arbiter of the electoral process is key. In cases where the responsible institution is generally seen as fair and impartial, but lacks capacity, donor assistance can be effective in bolstering the State's capacity to conduct the range of election administration tasks (e.g., registering political parties, conducting voter registration, training and mobilizing pollworkers, counting the vote, communicating results, and adjudicating disputes if this is a role for electoral rather than judicial bodies).

A critical issue arises when the bodies charged with election administration are not considered fair or impartial, as is often the case in the more conflict-prone environments.

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Some approaches have been tried in the past to address this issue. The goal of such intervention is to help assure that the election authority is either impartial or balanced among factions competing in the process. At the policy level, the international community can help competing groups to negotiate representation on the election commission, as in Haiti. Or, through providing technical assistance and training, donors can help make a biased body more fair and impartial. In six post-conflict elections examined in “Bullets to Ballots”, the neutrality of the election commission was better ensured in the approach to political 'balance' – by having competing parties represented rather than technocrats who were assumed to be non-biased. However, more attention needs to be devoted to the effectiveness of these efforts and to highlight some innovative and effective approaches.

2. *Election Security.* If compromised by violence, the basic objective of elections – to replace violent conflict with peaceful competition – is undermined. Some violence is likely in nearly all elections, and certain countries with consolidated democratic systems like India still experience wide spread violence during election cycles. But the key is to prevent violence from becoming so widespread that it undermines the integrity of the result, either in terms of the ability of a party to compete, of voters to register and vote, or in the count of the vote and determination of the winner. Ultimately, the judgement as to whether an election is genuine is whether it reflects the will of the citizens. An insecure environment raises questions as to whether the will of the people can be expressed.

Donors often focus attention on protecting candidates, voters, election materials, and the overall integrity of the process. In some cases, election security is the responsibility of international peacekeepers, and in others, it is the responsibility of domestic actors (military, police in tandem with election officials, political parties, media, civil society, judges and prosecutors), or some combination of international and domestic actors. Because violence will usually be geographically-dispersed and will require moving security forces rapidly from one location to another, early warning systems or other monitoring efforts have proven important, as in Bosnia, to predict conflict vulnerable locales and to mobilize security forces in a timely manner. But in some cases, such as Zimbabwe today, where the concept of electoral intimidation and political massacres by forces linked to those in power is becoming a basic operating principle, the U.S. must lead other donors to intervene at a macro level and ensure that electoral standards are clear and objective, with targets and timetables set out; the U.S. must also lead the donor community to spell out meaningful sanctions for violations of these standards and assure that such sanctions are imposed. Here USAID can help in supporting groups to define standards and benchmarks and intervene with local political actors in monitoring compliance.

One issue that arises in election security is that *domestic actors responsible for security may not be impartial.* They may be partisan (e.g. military or police are tied to a given party) or have institutional stakes in the outcome (e.g. the military hopes to demonstrate that it, rather than civilian authorities, is the only force capable of governing). If security forces are accorded significant roles in election security, other problems in terms of fraud, intimidation, and/or politicization of security apparatus may be created. USAID's role in countering this problem may be limited to supporting monitoring of the environment and assuring the open reporting of violations.

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Another issue is that *those who instigate violence need to face legal consequences or vigilantism may result*. In Indonesia, for example, perpetrators of violence were detained for only short periods and subsequently released. The victims and families of victims then took matters into their own hands with violence on par or worse than the initial events. The legal provisions for arresting and prosecuting perpetrators of violence is an additional consideration in conflict-prone settings. USAID's assistance in such a situation will need to be part of a broader, longer-term program aimed at promoting security and the rule of law.

3. Domestic Electoral Oversight – Enabling domestic actors to oversee the electoral process helps to deter fraud, provide information, and make the process more effective at resolving conflict. Providing political party pollwatchers with training on how to oversee voter registration, polling, and the vote count helps give parties the first-hand information on the freeness and fairness of these processes, and the presence of pollwatchers from multiple parties makes it less likely that competition will be compromised. Similarly, when domestic election monitors track the campaign process, voter registration, polling, and vote counting, as well as conduct quick counts or parallel vote tabulations, fraud can be substantially reduced and information made public on the quality of the election.

An important issue is *whether a range of organizations and interests are engaged in the monitoring effort*. Parties are, by definition, partisan and other groups may represent particular religious or ethnic populations. Domestic monitoring organizations often are tainted by the political persuasions of their leaders and may also have a particular ethnic or religious bias. The challenge for donors is to support enough of these efforts to gather information, deter fraud and make the process more transparent, without supporting too many such that there is an unmanageable diversity of verdicts on the election process, as was recently a concern for Nicaragua's upcoming elections. Support for domestic monitors to discuss the environment leading up to the election and to discuss the conduct of elections can help to both broaden each group's view of what is transpiring and also help explain discrepancies and the magnitude of potential threats to undermining the will of the people.

D. Regional/International Dimensions

During elections, regional and international dimensions are typically at play behind the scenes. Regional and international actors may foster the grievances, provide or deny the resources and/or support or undermine the State – all key elements of preventing or encouraging the conflict. Some tactics to address these problems are fairly common parts of election programs.

1. International/Regional Election Observers. Having “outsiders” present to monitor the election period can help to coalesce regional and international organizations and governments around the objective of resolving a given conflict via free and fair elections. If the election process is generally free and fair, the fact that international observers acknowledged the election as a legitimate process helps to encourage the losers to accept the results. If the process is seriously flawed, observers will issue statements that highlight what went wrong, and what would need to change in the future for a legitimate election to take place. In addition, international observers provide a 'cover' for domestic observers who generally cover significantly more of the country, know better the nuances related to electoral mischief, and also gain legitimacy from their association with international observers.

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An important issue arises *when we anticipate that elections will be seriously flawed*. “Managed” or “sham” elections are common, and techniques used by incumbents in Kenya, Kazakhstan, Peru have been adapted to places like Zimbabwe, Kyrgyzstan, or Venezuela. International or regional groups that are allowed to observe may be selected carefully from those organizations that the government considers sympathetic. With short visits, the fraud and abuses that were part of the pre-election period are not as apparent, and their official statements on the elections legitimize a flawed process. If “objective” election observers are not allowed entry into a particular country, the challenge to assist domestic groups, and to encourage the outsiders who are invited in to hold to objective, internationally accepted standards (as we are currently attempting in Zimbabwe). Even if objective observers are permitted to arrive, if they are present only for the election event and don't know the country well, then they are unlikely to detect any irregularities other than gross abuses.

Another issue is that *international or regional election observers may care more about having elections succeed as an alternative to conflict than about the quality of the peaceful competition*. If this is the case, the tendency may be to ignore serious flaws. A good example is in post-conflict settings where there is an implicit incentive for the international community to end costly and dangerous international peacekeeping and hand-off to an elected government (Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo). Or regional observers may represent the interests of neighboring states that need elections to be a success so that they can repatriate refugees or address other problems caused by the conflict spilling across borders. And the international community is often concerned primarily with the conduct of the election day and a non-conflictive environment for voters. A willingness to accept an inherently flawed but peaceful election only underscores the likelihood of violence later. The danger in this situation is that the losers in a critically flawed election contest will see the democratic process as a sham and will resort to violence yet again for redress.

2. *Post-Election Transitions*. Even the best of elections will have flaws that can provide an excuse to the loser to claim that s/he should have won. If the loser is likely to resort to violence, election mediation can be key to facilitate the peaceful transfer of power. Some negotiations take place after the election to get the losing dictator to step down (Marcos, Ortega, Pinochet). However, setting the stage for a peaceful post-election transition need not wait until after the election. For example, former-President Carter recently conducted a pre-election visit to Bangladesh and began discussions with the two major political parties about a constructive role for the opposition, whichever party that might be. Often, these types of contentious power issues can be more easily resolved when it is not yet clear who the winners and losers yet are. Moreover, pre-election expectation of a loss may trigger violence, and identifying a meaningful role for the opposition in advance may avert violence.

IV. Potential Other Approaches

If elections are anticipated in conflict-vulnerable countries, it is probably important to go beyond the standard election “tool kit”. Many of the solutions to the factors contributing to violence may be well beyond the scope of an election assistance effort, and may range from environmental to economic to cross border solutions. The following ideas are potential democracy and governance-related activities that could be carried out during

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the election period and that have the potential to mitigate conflict. Other ideas need to be sought out, collected, and tested as well.

A. Media

Media can either help or hinder conflict from spreading through quality, responsible reporting. During the election period in particular, it will be key whether the media resorts to reporting on rumor or fact, editorializes to exacerbate dangerous societal divisions or to present differing views, and/or sets a tone for violent action or peaceful competition. The efforts of political leaders to incite violence can be counterbalanced by objective and factual reporting.

USAID has media programs ongoing in many countries, and increasingly, USAID is linking election assistance activities and our domestic partners to the media. Domestic monitors and the media can benefit one another – the data collected by domestic monitors gives journalists newsworthy and comprehensive information and coverage serves to inform the public at large.

Specific solutions to conflict need to be tailored to the situation. In places like Indonesia and Nigeria, for example, better reporting by media at the regional and local level may serve to deter violence. In Indonesia, a riot in one location can quickly spread to neighboring towns because rumors are instigated by those who want violence to spread, tensions heighten, and people take their grievances to the streets. Timely reporting by local radio of the circumstances of the riot and specific reporting on violent incidents holds great potential to reduce violence.

B. Electoral Conflict Monitoring and Mitigation

USAID has used electoral conflict monitoring for the purposes of mobilizing the military or police to deter violence related to elections, but has not widely used this kind of information to inform other types of election activities. Typically, an electoral conflict monitoring effort involves establishing a central place for sending and tracking information and a database that can be readily analyzed. Kenya, in anticipation of elections in 2002, plans to implement a conflict monitoring network through a number of local NGOs. Once conflict-prone areas are identified, a wide range of programs might be initiated in those settings, not limited at all to election security.

C. Non-Violence Training

The principles and techniques of non-violence can counterbalance or dampen the tendency toward violence during elections. The mystique surrounding figures like Ghandi and Martin Luther King can help people who feel victimized understand that violence is not the only recourse, and that some true heroes rejected it altogether.

In both Haiti and South Africa, USAID sponsored visits of prominent former civil rights activists from the Martin Luther King Center to discuss non-violence. Prior to the 2001 Haitian elections, former colleagues of Rev. King met with party leaders, police, and volatile popular organizations dominated by discontented youths. With subsequent conflict resolution training for leaders of popular organizations, potential rock-throwers and tire burners came to understand that legitimate grievances like unemployment were

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being manipulated by political parties which were paying them small sums to take to the streets.

D. Police-Community Relations

During elections, police working throughout the country need to understand as much about the process as pollworkers, domestic monitors, and party pollwatchers, and can be brought into training sessions and provided with information on conflict prevention. Moreover, local police need to be part of the election security network – feeding information into a conflict monitoring system and receiving information from it as well to help them better do their jobs. Legislative restrictions, however, on engaging police in USAID programs may arise and would need to be confronted on a case by case basis.

E. Safe Haven

When elections are taking place in a situation where intimidation, fear and violence are pervasive, USAID can be helpful in providing a safe haven to lawyers, journalists, human rights activists, and others who are being attacked. The elections may be a period of intense violence, but they may be the only way out of the violence too, if the conflict is generated by the government, as in Zimbabwe today.

IV. Next Steps

The intention of this paper is to stimulate and structure a broad discussion within USAID, and with our implementing partners and academics on the topic of elections, political party development, and conflict. As we engage in these discussions, a number of practical questions need to be at the forefront:

- ***Which are the most-conflict prone countries where elections, whether national or local, require attention with regards to conflict prevention approaches?*** Nearly all upcoming elections have some potential for conflict, but trying to address conflict in all would be unmanageable and dissipate resources. We need to focus on a select set, find the human and financial resources needed, and get the commitment of Missions and Embassies to tailor programs towards conflict prevention.
- ***For these countries, how can we quickly complete good quality analysis that will identify potential national and sub-national triggers of conflict that can be addressed with assistance?*** We need this information to determine how this will influence election programs specifically, but also how other USAID programs in the DG, EG, PHN and other fields might be modified to serve for conflict prevention.
- ***What are the best ways of monitoring conflict in these countries?*** We will need to establish effective monitoring efforts, both to assure election security and to identify geographic areas where we should focus attention on local media development, domestic/international monitoring, community-police relations, provide non-violence training and/or safehaven.
- ***How can USAID and partners keep our programs flexible enough to be able to address conflict mitigation and prevention?*** Missions and partners are still bound

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by results frameworks, contract deliverables, and other sets of expectations. There is a natural tendency to resist trying to do even more with the same amount of money and the same staff. Still, if USAID and partners do not focus on conflict prevention and the country implodes leading to chaos, the question of results is superfluous. For this reason, we need first to engage Missions and implementing partners in the most conflict-prone of countries in a dialogue to determine how to manage flexibly for conflict prevention, not as a competing demand, but as an integral part of our efforts.