



Good Governance Brief

LGSP Aceh Election Support

Local elections are fundamental to the consolidation of democracy.¹ They allow for tailored representation of local interests and facilitate the inclusion and representation of minority groups (such as former combatants or indigenous groups) in political life. By improving representation, local elections also have the potential to close the gap between elected officials and constituents and to give citizens better access to policy makers. As local elections often take place in cycles that are separate from general elections, they can function as an important interim gauge of national politics. Finally, as more and more new democracies move toward decentralization, local elections provide a way for people to express their political will through democratic elections in their own communities.



Voters queue to cast their votes in Aceh

On December 11, 2006, the electorate of Aceh cast ballots at over 8,500 polling stations across the province to elect new local and provincial leaders. Coming in the wake of the devastating 2004 tsunami and the 2005 landmark Peace Accord between the Government of Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement (*Gerakan Aceh Merdeka*, GAM), these were the first direct elections (*Pilkada*) of local leaders in Aceh. They represented a critical step in restoring lasting peace and stability to this conflict-stricken region and in ensuring that all citizens, including those who have been displaced, are able to exercise their democratic right to vote.

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Heads and deputies of 19 local governments (*kabupaten/kota*, or districts)² were elected, as were officials to hold the key positions of governor and deputy governor. The voter turnout was an impressive 80 percent. The elections were considered free and fair by the international community. A large majority of the Acehnese themselves also believed the elections were democratic: In a USAID-funded opinion poll in January 2007, 92 percent of respondents said the elections were “completely” or “mostly” fair, and only 3 percent “not fair at all.” Very few countries in the world can show such figures. Campaign and polling violations were minor, and although there were protests in several

¹ See end of document for suggested additional reading on this and other relevant topics.

² The remaining two local governments will have elections in 2008.

regions, there were no clashes or legal actions (interestingly, the level of protest was related to who won the elections; districts in which “old” nationalist parties won saw the largest protests, while there were few protests in the areas where the Free Aceh Movement won).

The Aceh *Pilkada* elections were the first true test of the political will to end decades of violent conflict, and they proved very successful. The result was a resolute vote for change. Conventional wisdom held that candidates representing the previously banned Free Aceh Movement would perhaps pick up two or three of the district races, but certainly not the provincial governorship; and that the established Jakarta-linked parties would benefit from access to funds, established networks, and splits within GAM. But GAM won overwhelmingly: Candidates representing the Free Aceh Movement were elected to the governorship (with twice as many votes as the runner-up) as well as winning in seven jurisdictions. Only five incumbent officials were reelected, and these were leaders who had proven themselves reform-minded in the eyes of voters. The elections went a long way toward showing the important role of local elections in supporting reconciliation, peace-building and regional autonomy.

Recognizing the importance of advanced preparation for impartial and effective electoral administration, the U.S. Government was one of the first to extend technical support to Aceh’s Independent Election Commission (*Komite Independen Pemilu*, KIP) through its Local Governance Support Program (LGSP). With support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and in coordination with other donor election support programs, LGSP provided KIP the technical assistance to develop a complete system for managing these landmark first direct elections in Aceh. In collaboration with subcontractor Democracy International (DI), LGSP began supporting KIP in August 2005, lasting to Election Day in December 2006, for a total of \$475,000.

Those preparing the elections faced a number of challenges, including developing a new legal framework in a post-conflict environment; making arrangements for accurate and comprehensive registration and voting for half a million voters displaced by the tsunami; ensuring the competency and impartiality of election managers and the process for dispute resolution; and handling the sheer logistics of safely delivering and collecting voting materials in areas with little or no infrastructure. As a result of these concerns, the elections—originally scheduled for April 2006—were delayed until December 2006.

Election Management

Initial LGSP assistance focused on building the management capacity of KIP at all levels, developing a legal framework, and implementing a system for voter registration. To increase management capacity, LGSP, in coordination with other donors and local partners, facilitated a series of management workshops with the KIP leadership at the provincial level and KIP representatives from the district level to address key electoral issues, including integrity of the electoral process, procurement of goods and services, logistics, observer training, and media relations.

The lack of legal precedent and the challenging operational environment in Aceh meant that many election processes—such as voter registration, candidate registration, and campaigning—needed a different regulatory framework than for the *Pilkada* in other parts of Indonesia. An LGSP review of KIP’s existing regulations for these processes showed that they were not in line with good practices in election management and international standards for elections. Working with provincial and national partners such as the University of Syiah Alam, the Aceh NGO Forum (a province-wide network

of nongovernmental organizations), and the Minister of Home Affairs, LGSP staff reviewed and commented on the existing legal framework and developed recommendations for changes that took Aceh's unique political, social, and cultural fabric into consideration. Trainings were held on ethics and integrity of election management (in collaboration with the Japan International Cooperation Agency, JICA), on procurement regulations (in collaboration with Indonesian Procurement Watch [IPW] and the General Election Commission), and on election planning (in collaboration with the Aceh NGO Forum). Besides regular training sessions, LGSP also produced some of the very first posters informing the public about the upcoming elections, as well as booklets on election management integrity that were distributed across the province—3,000 copies of each booklet.



A woman participant introduces herself before the training on logistics of Pilkada started

Voter Registration

LGSP provided technical assistance to KIP to develop a system to reach and register voters, especially the nearly 500,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) living in Aceh and the thousands of ex-GAM supporters who were rejoining civic life. LGSP, in partnership with the Aceh NGO Forum, conducted consultation workshops in 10 cities in Aceh to help KIP officials understand the issues and magnitude of conducting a voter-registration effort in a province where an estimated 20 percent of registered voters had died or been displaced by the tsunami, and where the potential for political conflicts was still ripe. The workshops provided a forum for KIP to talk directly to voters about registration issues, such as reaching displaced voters, developing accurate lists, or issuing new identity documents. A final workshop with government officials, GAM representatives, election officials, and civil society groups resulted in a set of recommendations that ultimately provided the basis for the regulations on voter registration. This work fed into the actual registration of voters, coordinated by the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), which eventually reached some 93 percent of voters.

Review of Independent Candidate Verification Procedures

As a result of the Peace Accord between the GAM and the Government of Indonesia, Aceh became the only province in Indonesia in which independent (non-party-affiliated) candidates have been allowed to run for office. LGSP advised KIP on developing regulations to verify independent candidates for the elections. In collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), LGSP trained provincial KIP members on the candidate verification process. Resource persons from universities and local civil society organizations provided important input for KIP in the drafting of the decree for independent candidates. The regulation was passed by the Provincial Legislative Council (DPRD) in mid-October 2006, and was implemented by KIP without difficulties.

Elections Procedures Training for Journalists

In September 2006, LGSP held four-day workshops for local journalists on “How to Cover the Pilkada.” The objective of the training was to help prepare journalists to fulfill their role as a reliable source of

information about the election. Thirty-three journalists from Aceh participated in the program. The workshop was based on a module from the international-standard Building Resources in Democracy, Governance, and Elections (BRIDGE) program. LGSP-USAID adapted the module to apply specifically to journalists covering the elections. The training served as a forum for journalists to work with a number of resource persons from KIP, other (senior) journalists, and election monitors. Presentation topics included technical aspects of the *Pilkada*, KIP's election preparations, the legal framework of the *Pilkada*, and nomination requirements. During campaigning, balloting, and vote counting, local media in Aceh by and large reported in a balanced way without overly speculating or instilling fear, which contributed to the peaceful and democratic outcome of the elections.

National and International Observer Accreditation

LGSP worked closely with KIP to develop procedures for accrediting domestic and international election observers. In a joint workshop led by LGSP consultant Alan Wall from Democracy International and Somsri Berger from the Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL), LGSP brought together 45 members from the “observer working groups” of province- and district-level election commissions. The training—the only one of its kind in Aceh—introduced the regulatory framework for involving international observers, and the training that KIP would need to carry out to prepare its national observers.

Polling and Counting Procedures: Training and Manual Development

A successful and transparent election relies on the ability of officials to manage the electoral process. The December 11 *Pilkada* required the coordination and training of election officials at the provincial level, in the 21 *kabupaten/kota*, and in 435

kecamatan (subdistricts) to supervise over 8,500 individual polling stations. LGSP provided technical assistance to KIP to develop key policies on polling and counting procedures and trained more than 500 key election officials and staff across the province in election management operations, vote counting and tabulation, independent candidate verification, polling station operations, election observer accreditation, and procurement integrity. To assist in the training process, LGSP also developed three manuals, and in coordination with the UNDP, distributed 25,000 of these manuals throughout the province. These trainings and manuals were the basis for a separate USAID-funded “cascade” training program that reached over 50,000 poll workers and were the only comprehensive guide and training on regulation and procedures. The three manuals were:



USAID-LGSP manuals were widely distributed to election officials before Election Day.

1. *Buku Pelatihan KPPS-Kelompok Penyelenggara Pemungutan Suara*. A training manual for the Election Committee (KPPS) at the village level to train poll workers slated to staff the 8,500+ individual polling stations.
2. *Buku Panduan Pelaksanaan Pelatihan Pelatih dan pelatihan pelaksana pemilihan Gubernur/Wakil Gubernur, Bupati/Wakil Bupati atau Walikota/Wakil Walikota Prov NAD 2006*. A manual for the sub-district election committee (*Panitia Pemilihan Kecamatan, PPK*) at the *kabupaten/kota* level to implement a training-of-trainers system for poll workers.
3. *Buku Panduan Pemungutan dan Penghitungan Suara Pemilihan Gubernur/Wakil Gubernur, Bupati/Wakil Bupati atau Walikota/Wakil Walikota Prov NAD 2006*. A comprehensive guide to polling and counting procedures, regulations and election laws, dispute resolution, related forms, and telephone numbers for key KIP personnel.

Day-to-Day Technical Assistance and Management Support to KIP

Beginning with its initial meetings in June 2005 and the establishment of the Aceh regional office in September 2005, LGSP provided KIP with consistent on-the-ground assistance leading up to the December 2006 elections. LGSP's technical assistance was rooted in the belief that a well-executed and transparent electoral process in Aceh was essential for ensuring the legitimacy and public acceptance of the election results and for supporting lasting peace in the province. The program was flexible in meeting KIP's specific needs while steadily working to build KIP's infrastructure and technical expertise in election implementation and developing its legal and operational framework to meet good electoral practice standards. This assistance and advice were provided by a number of internationally qualified consultants:

- **Alan Wall** is an internationally renowned expert on election management. A coauthor of *International Electoral Management Design: The International IDEA [Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance] Handbook*, Mr. Wall spent more than five months during 2005–2006 with LGSP preparing for the elections. He was a speaker at many of the KIP trainings and provided crucial input into the drafting of the legal framework regulating the elections, including holding regular meetings with legal experts at the Ministry of Home Affairs to ensure compliance between the sections on election in the Helsinki Peace Accord and the Law on Governing Aceh.
- **Silvana Puizina** is associated with Democracy International as an election management specialist and was posted at the KIP office during September–December 2005, where she advised KIP on election management and voter registration procedures.
- **Dhyana Paramita** was contracted as LGSP's Aceh Election Program Manager from January 2006 to January 2007. Ms. Paramita arranged training activities and coordinated LGSP's program with those of other donors. Using her expertise as an international election worker, she also advised KIP on management issues. Together with Mr. Wall, she was the primary author of the three polling and counting manuals.

A team of professionals consisting of Admira Dini Salim, Elizabeth Koesrini, Ika Sartika, and Yudirman Zebua provided training and technical support for LGSP's program.

The program was managed at the LGSP national office through Governance Advisor Hans Antlov and Legislative Strengthening Specialists Dicky Dooradi (June 2005–April 2006) and Ratih Adiputri (May 2006–December 2006).

Collaboration with Other Donors and USAID Programs

Throughout the program, LGSP collaborated intensely with other donors. LGSP also assigned a full-time advisor (Ms. Paramita) to coordinate with the KIP office; and to share information, lessons learned, and program activities with other donors. Partners for LGSP voter registration activities included GTZ and the National Democratic Institute (NDI), which carried out a voter registration audit. On election management activities, LGSP worked closely with the UNDP's Aceh Local Election Support (ALES) program, which was the other major *Pilkada* support program. LGSP participated actively in donor coordination meetings in Aceh and Jakarta, sharing information and discussing joint collaborations. Several embassies and donors participated in these regular meetings, including USAID partners such as International Republican Institute (IRI), International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), NDI, and the Asia Foundation.

Lessons Learned

A key factor in LGSP contributions to building the election management capacity of KIP was the intense and long exposure that LGSP had with KIP. As is further elaborated in IDEA's *Electoral Management Design* handbook, the electoral framework can determine both the outcomes and credibility of electoral processes. The development of professional electoral management is not merely a technical issue, but a process that engages political stakeholders who have their own interests and objectives. It is crucial that electoral management bodies have the capacity to act fearless and objectively. Through intense exposure, LGSP could build trust with KIP members and teach some of these skills.

As could be expected in such a fluid political situation, there were managerial and administrative tensions and conflicts. For instance, the head of the supporting KIP Secretariat was replaced less than three months ahead of the election, which meant that capacity-building had to start anew. This would not have been possible had it not been for the actual day-to-day presence of LGSP at KIP and the flexibility of the USAID funding.

It is also crucial to have staff who understand the technical and managerial issues, as well as the context. Organizing an election in any jurisdiction is difficult. To do so in a post-conflict and devastated area is all the more challenging. LGSP was fortunate to have the expertise of Democracy International and others that could bring extensive election management experience to the table. There are many choices that need to be made concerning electoral systems, and options need to be presented by specialists. It also benefited LGSP's election program to have an established office in Aceh with local staff who deeply understood the local context.



Witnessed by citizens, officials count votes on Election Day.

List of LGSP Programs for Aceh *Pilkada* (2005–2006)

No.	Activities	Date	LGSP Partner
1	Media Relations Training for KIP Members	August 29–30, 2005	Aceh NGO Forum
2	Election Management Work Plan Training	December 1, 2005	KIP
3	Workshop on Integrated Communication Strategies for Elections	December 3, 2005	KIP
4	Aceh <i>Pilkada</i> Multiple Stakeholders Meeting	January 2006	KIP, donors
5	Training on Integrity in Electoral Management for Provincial KIP	March 18, 2006	KIP, JICA
6	Production of posters and booklet on integrity	March–April 2006	KIP, JICA
7	Training on Integrity in Electoral Management for District KIP in Aceh (divided into 4 clusters)	March 20, 2006 (for cluster 1–2), March 22, 2006 (for cluster 3–4)	KIP, JICA
8	Training on Procurement; Procurement Overview for Election in Aceh	June 5–8, 2006	National Development Planning Agency (Bappenas), General Election Committee (KPU), IPW, KIP
9	Focus Group Discussion (FGD) on Factual Verification of Independent Candidates for Aceh <i>Pilkada</i>	August 4, 2006	KIP
10	Training on Role of Election Observers	August 25–27, 2006	KIP, ANFREL
11	Training for Journalists on Reporting on <i>Pilkada</i>	September 16–17, 2006	Aceh reporters, KIP
12	FGD on Counting Polling Results	October 7–8, 2006	KIP, UNDP
13	FGD on Counting Recapitulations	October 14–15, 2006	KIP, UNDP
14	Print production: layout and printing of LGSP <i>Pilkada</i> manuals	November 10–17, 2006	PT Kreasi Baru
15	Distribution of manuals from Jakarta to Banda Aceh, and from Banda Aceh throughout Aceh districts	November 27–30, 2006	Bersaudara Express Cargo and CV Andiya Tour and Travel
16	Cascade Training (Training of Trainers) for KIP <i>Kabupaten/Kota</i> at Provincial Level	November 18–21, 2006	UNDP
17	Training of Trainers at PPK/ <i>Kecamatan</i> Level	November 22–27, 2006	USAID-SPD/E-Card

Further Reading

For basic information about local elections and election management:

Bland, Gary. *Elections and the Development of Democratic Local Governance*. <http://www.ddlg-at-work.com/Elections%20and%20DDL%20Final%209-30-06.pdf>

Wall, Alan, Andrew Ellis, Ayman Ayoub, Carl W. Dundas, Joram Rukambe, and Sara Staino. *Electoral Management Design: The International IDEA Handbook*, http://www.idea.int/publications/emd/upload/EMD_inlay_final.pdf.

For reports on the Aceh elections:

Indonesia: How GAM Won in Aceh. Update Briefing No. 61. Jakarta: International Crisis Group, February 2007, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm>; select “Reports,” then “My Profile” to register (free); full URL is http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/asia/indonesia/b61_indonesia_how_gam_won_in_aceh.pdf

Opinions and Information on the Pilkada Aceh Elections 2006: Key Findings from an IFES Survey. Jakarta: International Foundation for Electoral Systems, February 2007, <http://www.ifes.org/publication/da48709050aa294dfdc0cda43969420b/IFES%20Aceh%20Pilkada%20Survey%201%20Exec%20Summary.pdf>

Aceh Local Elections Support (ALES) Project. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), not dated, <http://www.undp.or.id/archives/prodoc/ProDoc-ALES.pdf>.

For updates on conflict in Aceh:

Aceh Conflict Monitoring Update. Jakarta: World Bank & Decentralization Support Facility, 1-31 January 2007, <http://www.conflictanddevelopment.org/data/doc/en/regCaseStudy/aceh/mon/Aceh%20Conflict%20Monitoring%20Update%20-%20Jan07.pdf>