



## News From the *ACE Electoral Knowledge Network*

Print and Distribute: [Download](#) this newsletter as a printable PDF [\[PDF\]](#)

### Feature Articles



#### Strengthening Electoral Processes: the Role of EMBs between Elections, Civil Registry and International Electoral Observation

The Organization of American States (OAS) and Elections Canada hosted the Sixth Inter-American Meeting of Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) in Ottawa, Canada from June 21-23. The event highlighted the role of EMBs between elections, civil registration and international observation. ... [read more »](#)



## Open Source Software and the Electoral Assistance Community

Expanding the use of open source software may offer new opportunities for the electoral assistance community to improve coordination and modernize assistance missions. ... [read more »](#)



Roadblocks to the 2010 Palestinian Elections Several challenges must be overcome ahead of the critical 2010 Palestinian elections. ... [read more »](#)



Combining Civil and Voter Registration: Advantages and Limitations A

recent report analyzes the benefits and limitations of combining the civil and voter registration processes based on the experiences of both developed and growing democracies. ... [read more »](#)

## What's New with ACE

### *New Questions Answered*

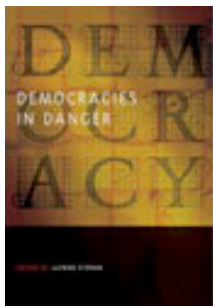
**Voting facilities for prisoners** "Is there a common method to implement voting in prisons? And would you say that it has to be specifically provided for in a regulation or law? Are there many countries that allow sentenced prisoners to exercise their right to vote by providing special voting facilities for them?" ... [read more »](#)

**Retention of election materials** "According to USA federal code 42 USC 1974, some types of election materials must be held for a period of 22 months after the election. Do other countries have similar provisions? Or are data retention provisions implied by the country's recount or electoral dispute resolution provisions?" ... [read more »](#)

**Absentee voting facilities in Bhutan** "...Given that separation of voter and civil registry is not feasible [in Bhutan] and increasing the number of postal ballots is not considered an option by the government, what methods have proven effective in other countries and might be applicable in Bhutan for allowing voters to vote at their place of residence in a constituency other than where they are registered?" ... [read more »](#)

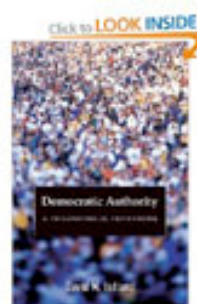
**Electoral education for children** "Do you know of any innovative approaches to teaching electoral education to school aged children?" ... [read more »](#)

## Information Resources



### Democracies in Danger (Democratic Transition and Consolidation)

[Order your copy »](#)



### Democratic Authority: A Philosophical Framework

[Order your copy »](#)



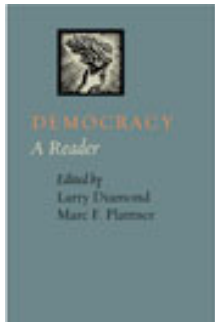
### Democracy Needs Dispute: The Debate on the European Constitution

[Order your copy »](#)



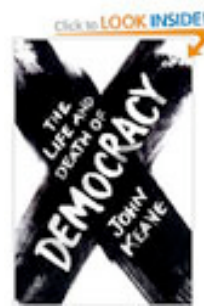
### Elections and Conflict Prevention Guide

[Download »](#)



### [Democracy: A Reader](#)

[Order your copy »](#)



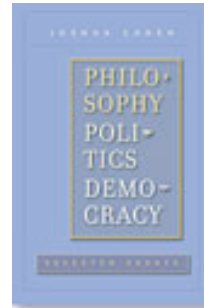
### [The Life and Death of Democracy](#)

[Order your copy »](#)



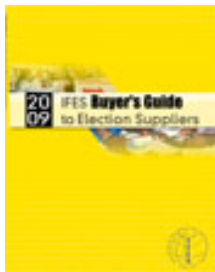
### [Background Paper: Mediating Elections-Related Conflicts](#)

[Download »](#)



### [Philosophy, Politics, Democracy: Selected Essays](#)

[Read More »](#)



### [2009 IFES Buyer's Guide to Election Suppliers](#)

[Download »](#)



### [Political Finance Solutions for Political Parties in Muslim Majority Societies](#)

[Download »](#)

## Election Calendar

**Norway** Parliamentary, September 14

**Macau** Legislative, September 20

**Aruba** Parliamentary, September 25

**Germany** Parliamentary, September 27

**Portugal** Parliamentary, September 27

**Switzerland** Referendum, September 27

## Events Calendar

**September 3 - 5, 2009** | Yerevan, Armenia  
Association of European Election Officials Annual Conference  
<http://www.aceeeo.org/>.

**September 3 - 6, 2009** | Toronto, ON, Canada  
American Political Science Association 2009 Annual Meeting & Exhibition  
[http://www.apsanet.org/content\\_2665.cfm](http://www.apsanet.org/content_2665.cfm)



**September 7 - 8, 2009** | Luxembourg

VoteID 2009. Visit: <http://voteid2009.uni.lu/>

**October 22 - 23, 2009** | Paris, France

World e-Democracy Forum. Visit: <http://www.edemocracy-forum.com/>

**November 17 - 18, 2009** | Johannesburg, South Africa

The Fourth Annual EISA Symposium. Visit: <http://www.eisa.org.za/>

[Sign up yourself or a friend](#) to receive future issues of the ACE e-Newsletter

Print and Distribute: [Download](#) this newsletter as a printable PDF [\[PDF\]](#)

[Contribute](#): We welcome contributions to the ACE newsletter



# ACE Electoral Knowledge Network

English

## Strengthening Electoral Processes: the Role of EMBs between Elections, Civil Registry and International Electoral Observation

*by Wendy K. Martinez*



From June 21 to 23, 2009 the Organization of American States' Secretary for Political Affairs through its Department for Electoral Cooperation and Observation (DECO) and Elections Canada hosted the Sixth Inter-American Meeting of Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) in Ottawa, Canada. The three day event focused on "Strengthening Electoral Processes: the Role of EMBs between Elections, Civil Registry and International Electoral Observation".

With the participation of 67 high level representatives from electoral management bodies from the Hemisphere, the main objective of the meeting was to discuss how EMBs may strengthen electoral processes, in particularly regarding three issues that have become increasingly important throughout the years: the role of EMBs between elections, voter registry and international electoral observation.

Ambassador Victor Rico, OAS Secretary of Political Affairs, inaugurated the event emphasizing that the meeting would be of benefit to all participating

EMBs and serve as an instrument in helping develop the tools necessary to continue promoting horizontal cooperation and strengthening electoral processes in the region.

Similarly, Mr. Marc Mayrand, Director General of Elections Canada, noted the importance of this Sixth Annual Meeting in generating dialogue, amongst the EMBs, to discuss challenges faced and exchange best practices regarding elections.

The meeting's agenda included panel presentations as well as a round table discussion facilitated by Elections Canada. The meeting included space for both dialogue and the exchange of experiences among EMBs.

The round table discussion was led by Mr. Mayrand and focused on the role of EMBs between elections. His initial presentation detailed the activities an EMB should conduct before an election, on Election Day and after. For example, during the pre-electoral period EMBs are responsible for planning the electoral calendar of activities, registering political parties and the electorate, training its staff and the members of voting tables on the procedures for Election Day as well as disseminating information on the process to be held. Likewise, Mr. Mayrand indicated that, on Election Day, EMBs tabulate the votes and ultimately, proclaim the official winners, among other things. During the Post-Electoral phase, he considered it important for EMBs to audit and evaluate the process in addition to developing methods aimed at improving the next election.

Mr. Mayrand listed the series of activities that an EMB could conduct between elections, and emphasized the need to focus on updating the voter's registry list, conducting civic education campaigns, researching new procedures aimed at strengthening processes and maintaining continued dialogue with other EMBs in order to

exchange experiences, challenges faced and best practices; implementing these strategies between election cycles helps to create an accessible, trustworthy and committed EMB.



The first panel discussion entitled “Electoral Registry” aimed at providing an opportunity for electoral authorities to share their experience in the use of new technologies to improve the quality of voters’ lists; the improvement of processes and security measures; and quality control mechanisms, among other things. The panel was composed of members of the Electoral Departmental Court of Bolivia, the General Director of Elections of Belize, the President of the Electoral Tribunal of Panama and the Commissioner of the US Elections Assistance Commission. Each panelist discussed the composition of their elections and methods used for voter registration. Additionally, they shared the difficulties each EMB encounters when organizing an election, specifically regarding voter registration.

The second panel discussion, “International Electoral Observation,” focused on a discussion of the advantages and added value of international electoral observation in different contexts, for example, in a situation of tight results; new aspects that could be observed by the missions; EMBs’ expectations regarding international missions; international and national regulations for electoral observation missions, among other issues. Ms. Magdalena Chu, Chief of the National Office of Electoral Processes of Peru, Ms. Nadica Mc Intyre, Supervisor of Elections of Grenada, and Mr. Manuel Carrillo, Coordinator of International Relations of the Federal Electoral Institute of Mexico were invited to share their perspective on the topic, addressing how electoral observation can contribute to the strengthening of elections as well as new challenges in this particular area.

The Inter-American Meetings of EMBs seek to promote the effective exchange of knowledge, experiences and best practices of electoral administration in the region. The first meetings was held in March of 2003 in Panama City, Panama and have subsequently been held in several other countries of the region. The more recent meetings, from 2007 to 2008, provided important impetus for information sharing and inter-institutional collaboration as well as very concrete initiatives to strengthen electoral authorities and to make elections more transparent and participatory. Starting in 2008, the OAS began institutionalizing its capacity building project known as the First Inter-American Electoral Training Seminar in cooperation with International IDEA, FLACSO and the Federal Electoral Institute of Mexico. At the 2008 meeting in Quito, electoral authorities themselves discussed and selected the priority topics to be addressed at the training seminar. The Fifth Inter-American Meeting was also a milestone in terms of regional participation. It was the first time in which electoral management bodies of the Caribbean participated. Their contributions demonstrated important commonalities between Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Seventh Inter-American Meeting of Electoral Management Bodies, to be held in the United States of America in 2010, will address new issues key to EMBs.

For more information, visit [http://www.oas.org/sap/espanol/cpo\\_cooperacion\\_sobre.asp](http://www.oas.org/sap/espanol/cpo_cooperacion_sobre.asp)

*Wendy K. Martinez works for the Department for Electoral Cooperation and Observation at the Secretariat for Political Affairs of the Organization of American States.*

# ACE Electoral Knowledge Network

English

## Open Source Software and the Electoral Assistance Community

*by Ajay Patel*

Software is the hidden building block of election administration. At nearly every stage of the process there is a program in a datacenter taking raw information and turning it into something useful. Be it voter rolls, ballots, or results, man gathers the information while machines do the real work.

The trust we apportion these machines is awesome; we rely on programs to tell us who won an election, who has the right to vote, and who is entitled to right to run as a candidate. They build ballots. They help identify suspicious behaviour. They handle masses of data with ease. Ideally, they help create elections that are fast, flexible and accurate. Because we trust these programs to handle so many fundamental analytic functions, their development and deployment should be as integral a part of mission planning as Logistics or Security.



Election missions build their critical software with little rigour or methodology, surprising given its importance. Open source software development is a proven approach with a focus on sharing, innovation, and strengthening programming community capacity. It is a way to bring better designed, more professional, sustainable products to both the missions and, more significantly, national election institutions.

International assistance missions spend hundreds of thousands of dollars and thousands of man-hours on software development to build and manage these mission-critical systems. Data integrity, critical functions, and significant investment; all are good reasons to expect that there are modern, effective products underpinning this work.

In fact, oftentimes this is not the case. Chances are an assistance missions' election software was built a long time ago; by a programmer who has reused the same code, mission after mission, stretching it to try and fit new needs. New name, new logo, same old code

It is tempting to think this is a good thing, that a program that has worked election after election has become richer with time, proved its sturdiness. This is not so.

These programs are built with old, rigid technologies that were never designed to be dynamic or reusable. This means that the recycling of old code is neither quick nor easy, and rather than code being strengthened by each iteration, it becomes increasingly fragile. Deeply hidden remnants of elections gone by can create unexpected results, wreaking havoc and taking days to find and purge. Programmers hired on a project-to-project basis have little time and motivation to develop a stronger overall product, only enough to get the job done and go home.



This points to an even greater issue within the electoral assistance IT community. Software and systems development has traditionally been conducted in an ad-hoc and non-collaborative manner, leading to systems with no standards and oversight, a lack of institutional development, and generally unremarkable products.

The election software development process is opaque. Inside missions, programmers do as they please, as few mission staff know enough to challenge or guide the software development process. Observers may try monitoring datacenter processes, but are often limited to lingering in tally centres watching data entry while the real work is done behind the scenes, beyond their reach and technical understanding.

A lack of collaboration has hampered the international election communities' efforts to build capacity in the national institutions they are assisting. Because international advisors falsely believe their value lies in the code, rather than their specialised knowledge, they resist sharing in a bid to protect future employment. IT advisors will often leave without handing over editable software to their national counterparts, and will rarely share these assets with their organizations or the international community. Although the ACE website offers nearly every other electoral resource you could think of, from budgets to stickers to manuals, election software is noticeably missing.

The isolationist approach to building software does not lend itself to innovation. Collaboration is key to creating better products, and the open source movement has shown us that software lends itself to being build collaboratively.

Open source software is developed using methodologies and standards that put collaboration, flexibility and reuse at the heart of the software. The resulting product is distributed freely, usually under a free software license, so it can be taken by others; used, improved and re-distributed, creating an effective development cycle with a community of programmers invested in the project.

This design approach has had extraordinary success. The Firefox web browser is an open source product that is used on nearly a quarter of computers worldwide. Linux is an open source operating system that powers 13% of the servers in the world, with support from sources as diverse as the Brazilian government and Nokia. Even the CIA uses open source software, to organise and search its data. Election software is simple by comparison.



Notably, many of these projects been developed by world-class programmers working as part-time volunteers. Development can take place remotely, or in concentrated 'geek meets' and code sprints. These programmers have various motivations: exercising technical talent, building prestige, or simply having an impact in the world. A number of open source projects are already involved in monitoring and crisis mapping elections. There would be tremendous interest within the open source community if given the opportunity to contribute to actually making elections happen.

If the election assistance community were to migrate to an open-source approach, the resulting software products and community would serve not only international assistance organisations, but also the institutions they strive to build. Open source software could be customised in-house by local developers or tailored by a network of global contributors. Communities have worked on similar projects for decades, they can be trusted to provide the skills for free support and development to national bodies long after international consultants move on and the attention spans of donors expire.

Would this mean the end of international IT election experts in the field? Almost certainly not, but it would encourage a shift in responsibilities towards coordination and oversight of projects, managing installations,

testing, training and troubleshooting. Capacity building of national staff might finally get the attention it requires. There would an opportunity to modernise electoral assistance missions operations, using IT to update logistics, field coordination and public outreach; areas of standard practice outside the field of election assistance.

Introducing open source products and philosophies to the electoral assistance community is an opportunity to inject some much needed innovation to its IT solutions. If open source software has provided better products, transparent solutions, and cheap community support to the other industries, perhaps it's time to see what it can do for international elections.

*Ajay Patel is an election technology and observation consultant with the United Nations and the National Democratic Institute. He is currently observing the Afghanistan elections.*

# ACE Electoral Knowledge Network

English

## Roadblocks to the 2010 Palestinian Elections

*By Vladimir Pran*

Statements by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Fatah and Hamas leaders indicate that Palestinian factions have agreed to hold elections in January 2010. There are, however, various contextual challenges that make the implementation of these elections far from certain.



The challenges faced take on a special urgency as the 2010 elections would be an important step for the continuation of the Palestinian government that was formed as result of the 1993 Oslo Peace Accords. In Oslo, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel negotiated the formation of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), which was led by Yasser Arafat until his death in 2004. Presidential elections were then held in 2005, and legislative elections were held in 2006. These elections resulted in the presidency of Mahmoud Abbas and a majority-win in parliament for Hamas. The 2010 polls would be the third set of elections for the Palestinian government.

Of even greater importance, the Palestinian population feels that a government must be democratically elected in order to be valid. Recent opinion polls suggest that Palestinians believe the government must go through elections in January 2010 to retain legitimacy.

This article presents a brief overview of the roadblocks to the 2010 elections:

### *Political or "Constitutional" Framework*

Once the various Palestinian factions and the President agree to hold the elections, they have to agree on a political/constitutional framework under which to conduct them. The 1996 elections were conducted as a result of the *Oslo Accords*. When President Arafat died in 2004, Palestinians carried out a ballot to elect a president and members of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC). They did this without a political agreement with Israel, following the Basic Law and the 2005 intra-Palestinian *Cairo Agreement*. It is, however, very difficult to conceive that in light of the current intra-Palestinian conflict both Hamas and the PNA can agree on Hamas' participation without a new intra-Palestinian political agreement. This agreement will likely require some concessions on Hamas' side regarding its stance toward PLO commitments.

### *International Community*

In 2006, the international community supported an electoral process in which Hamas took part. The financial and technical support of the international community was essential for the Palestinian Central Elections Commission (CEC). It supported the CEC's outreach and voter education activities; aided political factions in campaign organizing; and funded international observation missions. The large number of international observers contributed greatly to the credibility of the electoral process. However, similar support for the new elections under the same 2006 framework is uncertain. In the three years since 2006, the rules of engagement

(especially for the EU and the US) have changed to become stricter to ensure that no assistance is provided to Hamas.

### *Israel*

Israel's support is crucial for the elections to take place. Even a passive Israeli rejection of the Palestinian elections would render the implementation of the electoral process impossible.

Israeli authorities must facilitate implementation in several ways, including:

- The movement of Elections Commission goods (election materials) and personnel in the West Bank, between the West Bank and Gaza and to Jerusalem, during all of the phases of the electoral process
- The importation of election materials from overseas
- The movement of candidates and voters across the Palestinian territories during the campaign period
- Enabling the registration of candidates and campaigning in East Jerusalem and easing restrictions on voting of the Jerusalemite Palestinians
- The coordination of the deployment of Palestinian security forces

### *Fatah*

Fatah's situation has not improved much since its 2006 election defeat. Fatah's political program is unclear and the transition from a national movement into a political party is not going smoothly. The leadership remains divided and cannot agree on a formula for the (s)election of delegates of the long overdue 6th Fatah General Conference. Demands of the party base that the delegates be selected through internal elections processes have been largely ignored and lead to friction between the leadership and the party base. As it stands, Fatah's position in any electoral process is far from desired. President Abbas must call for elections for them to take place. He might be unwilling to do so while his party is in disarray.

### *Legal Framework*

In September 2007, President Abbas issued an election law under the pretext of an emergency government. Any piece of legislation issued by decree must be ratified at the end of the rule of the emergency government by the Palestinian Legislative Council for it to be legally binding. For this reason, Hamas disputes the validity of the 2007 Elections Law. There are two main areas of contention in the 2007 Elections Law: the system of representation and the "*PLO requirements*." If Hamas and the PNA agree on these two topics, it is safe to assume that legality of the law will not be an issue. The CEC is refraining from taking sides, choosing not to interpret either law. Instead, the CEC designed operational plans for either scenario. From the operational perspective, a *Proportional List* system of representation (*as proposed in the 2007 election law*) would be much easier to implement than the system used in the 2006 PLC elections.

### *Election Operations*

In 2005 and 2006, the Palestinian CEC successfully defied domestic political pressures and Israeli occupation and organized several large-scale operations. This helped prove the CEC's independence and capacity to conduct sound elections. After the legislative elections and voters' list were updated in 2007, the CEC reduced its staff but preserved its core infrastructure. Since the last elections the CEC has been actively working on building the capacity of its staff, reforming some aspects of the electoral process and fine-tuning operational plans.

However, despite the fact that the CEC has begun to prepare, it will face a challenging situation if the elections are called without sufficient time for expansion of infrastructure and staff. These are needed to carry out the



most demanding immediate task: the registration of voters. While the CEC was developing a plan to introduce continuous voter registration, the plan has not been rolled out because of the intra-Palestinian conflict. The CEC needs at least three months notice before polling begins to implement voter registration, as registration centers must open directly following the call for elections in order to update the list

Another challenge for the CEC is uncertainty over the system of representation. The registration of candidates, ballot printing, polling procedures and election materials all depend on the system chosen: the current system or a pure List Proportional Representation system. The CEC will also have little time to make arrangements for matters pertaining to Jerusalem, which have to be negotiated between the PNA and Israeli authorities. The Commission will have to invest substantial efforts to provide the best possible voting conditions to Jerusalemite Palestinians.

For more information, or to see the briefing paper on which this article is based, please click [here](#).

*Vladimir Pran is Chief of Party for IFES - West Bank/Gaza where he advises and provides training to the Palestinian Central Election Commission*

# ACE Electoral Knowledge Network

English

## Combining Civil and Voter Registration: Advantages and Limitations

*By Hadija Nassanga Miiró*

### Introduction and Background:

A number of countries generate voter lists from civil registries which contain detailed information on all citizens of all ages. Such registries may be supplemented by information from other government agencies like the police, insurance companies, passport offices and retirement schemes. Voter registration databases tend to have only information that is required to identify eligible voter and allows them to cast their votes in an election. The degree of success depends on a number of factors including the efficiency of the civil registry, legal framework for information sharing. Most democracies have separate voter registration processes. Typical examples where voter lists are generated successfully from civil registrations systems include Norway and Sweden, Albania, and Spain among others.



This paper discusses the benefits and limitations of combining civil and voter registration based on experiences of both developed and growing democracies.

### Principle Objective:

The author conducted the above study to respond to a growing need by election administrations and governments for information on the benefits and limitations of combining civil and voter registration processes. The main objective was to enable election administrators, governments and donors make informed decisions

### Methodology:

The research was based on literature review and telephone interviews with persons in countries that had implemented a combined CVR. The researcher received written information from national election administrators and international advisors on their experiences with CVR projects and had the opportunity to speak with a number of actors who had participated or supported CVR projects. The author also reviewed literature in election administrations where single line voter registration had been conducted successfully with maximum efficiency and minimum costs and where the reverse had been experienced.

With funding from the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) the author analyzed in depth the conditions of the civil and voter registries of Afghanistan (Miiró H, 2006). The findings formed the basis for the CVR pilot project in Afghanistan. While the results from this study are a prerogative of IFES and not presented in this report, the author used her experiences in the IFES study to supplement arguments in this report.

### Main Findings:

In many cases where joint voter registration processes had failed, governments and election management bodies had rushed to combining civil and voter registration in the heat of an election. Suddenly donors and governments realized that it was too expensive to conduct a national wide voter registration especially where previous registration had not generated an accurate register. Civil registry authorities rushed to use the opportunity to achieve what was difficult before: getting funding for a civil registry. Below are advantages and limitations reported most frequently in the study

### **Joint Civil and Voter Registration:**

#### **Advantages:**

1. In a number of cases, combining civil and voter registration was reported to have significantly reduced the cost of the two processes. This only happened in countries like Sweden and Norway where the joint CVR had stabled over years and was properly administered.
2. Combining CVR processes allowed data sharing among government departments and partners. For example when persons change their residence, they may inform the post office, tax bureau, housing authorities, insurance authorities. Data sharing partnerships are particularly important regarding deletions since the voter or his or her family often does not provide this information, vital statistics and other such officers who have access to such information play an important role providing this information
3. Continuous civil registration reduced voter fatigue as most registered voters need not report to registration offices to update their particulars. The register in most cases was updated automatically from information obtained by the civil registration authority or other such offices like the police, tax authority and insurance agencies.
4. A combined CVR reduced the burden of voter registration from the election administrations giving them time to concentrate on other electoral activities like planning and procedures, production of ballot papers, coordination and management of Election Day activities and tabulation and announcement of results.

#### **Limitations:**

1. On the other hand, where the CVR process was not well planned, it became very costly, took a long time to stabilize and did not generate reliable data for voter registration purposes. Successful implementation of a combined CVR was limited by a number of factors:
2. Conflicting mandates: By law, most election administrations were mandated to conduct voter registration while government departments: ministry of internal affairs/interior, department of home affairs or department of civil registry were mandated to conduct the civil registry. In many cases, decisions to combine the civil and voter registration processes were done without clear definitions of policies in relation to issues like: where the data centre would be houses, which agency would chair the steering committee and who would own and control the CVR database. While governments had interests in controlling civil registration data, EMBs had the mandate to control voter information. Conflicts among implementing agencies and beneficiaries resulted into delays or failure of CVR projects.
3. Disabling Legal Frameworks: In many cases, laws governing different governments that would benefit from a CVR restricted access to information. For example Canada, Britain and Australia have laws that prohibit elections officials to access personal information without expressive permission from the individuals concerned. Consequently only particulars for less than 50% of eligible voters can be automatically updated which reduces the cost benefits of a combined CVR process as resources are spent seeking permission from potential voters to include them on voters' lists or update their particulars.
4. In many countries where voter lists are derived from civil registry databases, there were still legal requirements for annual or periodic national wide updates of the voters' register during the immediate period prior to an election. In Cambodia for example, the law for election of the members to the national

assembly required updating the voters' register on an annual basis. In Canada information derived from other agencies did not guarantee 100% of voters' particulars. In many electoral constituencies, election officers still needed to conduct door to door visits to ensure new residents and those who had become of voting age were included on the voter's list

5. Lack of sufficient consultation and cooperation among implementing agencies: Combining civil and voter registration involved a chain of activities including data sharing and production and distribution of permanent national ID cards. These processes needed wide consultation and coordination among implementing agencies and beneficiaries, The CVR pilot project evaluation for Afghanistan cited lack of sufficient consultation and cooperation as major factors that limited the implementation of a joint CVR in Afghanistan. Statements like:

*"The management and staff of the ministry of interior did not have good cooperation with the staff of the Independent Elections Commission."*

*"The ministries of interior staff were not interested in the joint CVR and they left all the work to IEC staff."*

On the other hand, the ministry of interior accused the Independent Elections Commission of failure to consult them on key issues.

Lack of political understanding and agreements between different political forces was cited as one of the factors that delayed successful creation of a fully functional civil register intended to generate voter lists for 2006/7 local council elections in Albania

6. Production of national identity documents, creating linkages with other government department, and covering an entire population were some of the factors that made joint CVR more costly.
7. Limited Public Understanding and political perceptions: While the majority of ordinary voters viewed CVR as cost sharing process and an opportunity to obtain national identity documents, there were a number of opposition leaders who were skeptical and viewed a combined CVR as an attempt for their governments to identify and victimize opponents
8. Limited Capacity of Lead Agencies: Combining civil and voter registration is time consuming and requires very careful planning, sufficient technical capability and high organizational capabilities. While voter registration is the responsibility of election management bodies in many democracies, civil registry tends to involve more players, and beneficiaries. Sharing information among different government departments for example may require database linkages based on sophisticated soft ware and hard ware that may involve high technological skills to institute, operate and maintain. Lack of such skills and high costs for hire limited successful implementation of joint CVR especially in developing countries
9. Lack of location addresses, and Identity Requirements: While the OSCE/ODIHR had earlier recommended adopting a system of creating of a fully functional civil registration system in Albania whereby before each election voter lists would be extracted from the computerized updated civil registry kept in the civil status offices of local government units, such a civil registration system could not be established in time for the 2006/2007 local council elections. The process suffered from, lack of a fully functional system of addresses, lack of update identification documents and the constant and often unreported in country migration among others.
10. Variance in Donor Interest: Donors interested in funding voter registry were not necessarily interested in funding a combined process making it more difficult to mobilize funds for a joint process
11. Limited Time: The time available to conduct a CVR was reported as the single biggest challenge. Constitutional mandates defined timelines for voter registration and other election activities. To avoid constitutional crises and deliver credible elections according to legally defined timelines, EMDs needed increased autonomy in producing and providing the voters' register. Lack of accurate and comprehensive civil registry data, delays in enacting enabling laws and obtaining funding made it most difficult for EMBs to obtain and deliver accurate voter lists in instances where civil registration



processed were in their initial stages and had not stabilized. Countries like Sweden, Norway, and Canada who successfully produced voter lists from civil registry data had built their processes over decades. In many young democracies, the time available to prepare and conduct an election was usually too short to allow effective and efficient conduct of voter and civil registration exercises.

12. Some civil registration systems are very complex. In Afghanistan and Pakistan, civil registration requires linking each individual to his family members creating a family tree for each individual. In Afghanistan, the need by government to maintain family tree tracking system by tracking everyone's ancestry, resulted in many deceased persons remaining on the civil registry and was a major factor that limited the creation of a joint CVR.
13. Vested interests and Influence Peddling: Undue influence by interested suppliers of services, registration materials and soft ware particularly from international suppliers was reported as a major factor that limited successful implementation of CVR projects. There were reports of lead agencies being compromised by suppliers to select non appropriate or more costly systems in expectations of kickbacks from suppliers

### **Separate Voter Registration Process: Advantaged and Limitations**

#### **Advantages:**

1. Due to the fact that data required for single VR processes was limited to voter information and the target population in most cases was smaller consisting of only adults, 18 years or above, voter registration required shorter periods and less funds to conduct and complete.
2. Voter registration put more control into the hands of election authorities hence making them accountable for the quality of the register. Election Management Bodies (EMBs) in countries like Uganda and South Africa were more in control of the registration process than countries like Pakistan where voter lists were generated from civil registry data and in the hands of other government bodies like the ministry of interior.
3. Voter registries created by EMB were reported to be more accurate in most of the cases especially where CVR processes had not stabilized. Many people reported that it was easier to control non eligible voters from the registry if the register was in the hands of an EMB
4. Voter information was reported to be more secure in processes solely for voter registration purposes. This was again related to the fact that fewer information was collected all of which was in the control of a single organization
5. In countries like Cambodia, the costs of voter registration were reported to have decreased over years in spite of the fact that voter registration was not a direct result of the civil registry
6. Most EMBs with an ongoing VR carried periodic updates a short period to the elections. During the non election period, they did not need to report changes in domicile, deaths, and voter be coming of age. Civil registration required continuous reporting of population changes: births, deaths and change of residence
7. Many VR processes had generated accurate and comprehensive voter lists although in several cases this had taken time and in repeated updates and changes in registration procedures and technology.

#### **Limitations:**

1. Voter registration was not compulsory in most countries where it was a single process. Consequently the register left out many eligible voters especially disadvantaged voters like women and persons with disabilities.
2. In many developing democracies, like Afghanistan, separation of the voter registration process did not generate the desired results. Registration processes that has been conducted more than twice and at exorbitant costs did not generate registers that meet internationally acceptable standards
3. In many countries registration of voters had been left to the last hour: due late enacting of laws, lack of sufficient funds, poor security and limited administrative potential among others. The result was inaccurate voter lists with significant numbers of voters' particulars missing out on the final lists used on Election Day. This was the case in almost all first registrations after constitutional and or electoral reforms regardless of whether the registration process was single or combined.
4. Vested interests and fight for tenders were not only limited to combined CVR processes but were equally experienced in single VR processes. Influence of the tendering processes resulted into purchase of registration technologies that were unsuitable for particular environments. Consequently many processes did not produce accurate registers due to delays in implementing solutions or to contaminated choices of registration solutions
5. Voter registration is a comprehensive process. Naturally, single VR processes put a bigger burden on the EMB to organize and conduct. Ordinarily high numbers of staff are required to do field recording of voter data and to process the data into a register at central or regional offices. Voter registration requires periodic updates especially during the time before an election. The result is voter fatigue as voters need to continuously check if their names still exist on the register or to report changes in voting locations or to identify and report persons who dies or left the area.

## **Conclusion:**

While combining civil and voter registration is apparently cheaper and may allow sharing a bulk of information across government agencies, reducing voter fatigue and generating voter lists in a relatively shorter period where the process is administered efficiently, rushed decisions to combine the two processes, without sufficient consultation and planning, limited funding, lack of coordination among implementing agencies, limited time frames and a series of other factors combine to make joint CVR projects less beneficial than single voter registration processes. The decision to combine civil and voter registration processes must be based on the particular circumstances of a country and the ability of both government and the EMB to overcome the limitations associated with a joint process. All likely limitations must be carefully evaluated and the choice should be based on which option will deliver the most accurate and timely register under the particular circumstances.

*Hadija Nassanga Miiró is the Chief Technical Advisor/Elections for UNDP/Yemen.*

## **References:**

1. Miiró HN.; "Analysis of the Civil and Voter Registrations Systems in Afghanistan" *A basis for the CVR pilot Project in Afghanistan: Independent Elections Commission of Afghanistan and IFES (2006)*
2. Miiró NH.; Dauphinais D.; "Evaluation Report: Civil and Voter Registration Pilot" *Ministry of Interior and the Independent Elections Commission and IFES- Afghanistan (2007)*
3. ACE Electoral Knowledge Network: "Managing the Cost of Voter/Civil Registration-Country Experiences" [aceproject.org](http://aceproject.org)
4. ACE Electoral Knowledge Network: "Voter Registration Trends and Practices Around the World" [aceproject.org](http://aceproject.org)
5. Rosenberg JS.; Chen M "Expanding Democracy: Voter Registration Around the World" *Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law*
6. United Nations Information Services.; "Council Members Concerned About Low Voter Registration of Monitors for Kosovo Wide Elections" *New York 28 August (UN Head Quarters)*
7. Roberts E.; "Voter Registration: An International Perspective" *Fair Vote Research Report [www.fairvote.org](http://www.fairvote.org)*

8. OSCE/ODIHR “Needs Assessment Mission Report–Albania November 2006” *OSCE/ODIHR Publication 2006*
9. “Continuous Registration in Uganda” *The Electoral Commission of Uganda* [www.ec.or.ug](http://www.ec.or.ug)
10. Merloey P.; “Building Confidence in the Voter Registration Process: An NDI Monitoring Guide for Political Parties and Civic Organisations” *National Democratic Institute (2001)*
11. “Post Transitional Elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo” *aceproject.org*
12. “Ensuring Free and Fair Elections”.; *IEC South Africa* [iec@elections.org.za](mailto:iec@elections.org.za)
13. “Proposed Constitution of Sudan” [www.dcregistry.com/](http://www.dcregistry.com/)
14. “President on Voter Registration for Kosovo Elections 2001” *OSCE Mission in Kosovo Press Release (2001)*
15. “Voter Registration”.; *Interim Independent Electoral Commission Republic of Kenya* [www.wck.or.ek/](http://www.wck.or.ek/)
16. “Support to National Elections in Pakistan”.; UNDP Pakistan [www.undp.org.pk/](http://www.undp.org.pk/)
17. Elections in Pakistan: *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*
18. Australian Electoral Commission,; [www.aec.gov.au/](http://www.aec.gov.au/)