



AFRICA AND NEAR EAST

February 7, 2000

Sierra Leone

The signing of the Lomé Peace Accord in July 1999 by the Government of Sierra Leone and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) of Sierra Leone laid the foundation for the administration of the next national elections in Sierra Leone. The Lomé Accord states that the next national elections “shall be held in accordance with the present Constitution of Sierra Leone” and mandates the establishment of a new independent National Electoral Commission (NEC). To assist the people of Sierra Leone in preparing for and conducting these elections, IFES Program Officer Sue Palmer and consultant Simon Clarke traveled to Sierra Leone from December 4-20, 1999 to assess the state of election preparations and develop prioritized recommendations for strengthening elections administration and the electoral process. The mission was funded by the British Department for International Development and the U.S. Agency for International Development.

While in Sierra Leone, the assessment team held extensive discussions with the Acting Chairman and the staff of the Interim National Electoral Commission, representatives of political parties, officials of the Government of Sierra Leone, civil society activists and members of the international community. The team highlighted fundamental issues that must be resolved so that the planning for elections can proceed:

- Timing. When should the next presidential, parliamentary, Paramount Chief and local government elections take place?
- Electoral system. Should the parliamentary elections be held under the national list proportional representation system (as per legislative act) or the constituency-based first past the post system (as per the Constitution)? Is there another system that would best suit the needs of Sierra Leone?
- Legal framework. What should be the legal framework for these elections? Should Sierra Leone develop a universal election law incorporating the various, and sometimes contradictory, rules and regulations that currently constitute the legal framework?

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The NEC is to be established in early 2000. IFES has recommended that the NEC convene a Consultative Committee of representatives of registered political parties and civil society to assist the Electoral Commission in the development of the framework for the electoral process. The assessment team has also recommended:

- the provision of international technical assistance to the NEC to strengthen its ability to conduct the elections and to enhance the Commission's professional development;
- the establishment of a schedule for the forthcoming elections; and
- the enactment of a universal election law prior to the conduct of the next national elections.

IFES will on return to Sierra Leone in February 2000 to conduct follow-up discussions on the team's recommendations with the key stakeholders in the process.

AAEA

In early December 1999, Dr. Afari-Gyan, Executive Secretary of the Association of African Election Authorities (AAEA) and Chairman of the Electoral Commission of Ghana, was invited to provide a keynote luncheon address at the annual meeting of the Council on Governmental Ethics Law (COGEL) in Providence, Rhode Island. Dr. Afari-Gyan spoke on the challenges of election administration in Africa to over 300 state-level election officials from throughout the United States and other guests. Following his remarks, he fielded questions from the audience.

In January 2000, IFES Senior Program Assistant, Valeria Scott Laitinen, traveled to Accra, Ghana to provide on-site technical assistance to the Executive Secretariat of the AAEA. During her time in Accra, Ms. Laitinen met extensively with Dr. Afari-Gyan to explore how the AAEA could best transform its priorities into program activities. Dr. Afari-Gyan and Ms. Laitinen developed budgets and concept papers for some of these activities. The AAEA intends to seek donor support to fund the activities. AAEA priority activities include:

- A study on campaign finance laws and regulations in Africa;
- Development and delivery of training programs in election logistics, electoral conflict resolution, voter education programming, and election administration ethics to AAEA member countries;
- A study/assessment mission to an election in sub-Saharan Africa in 2000-2001; and,
- Production and translation of a quarterly newsletter.

To date, three AAEA member organizations - The Independent Electoral Commission of The Gambia, the Electoral Commission of Ghana and the Electoral Commission of Uganda - have paid full membership dues. CERCUDE, an associate member organization based in Cameroon, has indicated to the AAEA that it has requested a grant from the Government of Cameroon to cover its membership dues and other expenses. All AAEA members are expected to pay membership dues by December 2000.



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Burundi

In late September 1999, IFES and the International Human Rights Law Group received AID funding to administer a rule of law program in Burundi. In November and December, IFES and the Law Group began preparations to undertake an assessment mission to Bujumbura to develop a workplan for their respective rule of law programs. The IFES Burundi program team met with representatives from Search for Common Ground, Refugees International and the International Human Rights Law Group as well as the Burundian Ambassador to the U.S. H. E. Thomas Ndikumana.

In January, IFES and the Law Group sent assessment teams to Bujumbura to meet with representatives of the international community, civil society, the Burundian government and other key actors. The IFES assessment team will spend two weeks in Bujumbura and draft a workplan for IFES' rule of law program.

Côte d'Ivoire

The government of President Henri Konan Bedie was toppled by a December 24 Coup d'etat. Côte d'Ivoire's new leader, General Robert Guie, presides over the National Committee of Public Salvation (CNSP) and the transitional government. In late January, General Guei announced that elections would be held by the end of October 2000 to restore Côte d'Ivoire to civilian rule.

In January, the IFES/Côte d'Ivoire team met with US government representatives to discuss the challenges posed by the transition timeline. IFES has prepared a concept paper outlining options through which IFES could support Côte d'Ivoire's return to civilian rule.

Dem. Rep. of Congo

The conflict in the DRC received unprecedented international attention in December 1999 and January 2000 due to U.S. Ambassador Richard Holbrooke's visit to the region and his invitation to president Kabila and seven regional heads of state to a UN Security Council meeting in New York at the end of January. All parties to the conflict have now agreed on former Botswanan President Ketumile Masire as facilitator for the inter-Congolese dialogue called for in the Lusaka Accord. UN Secretary General Kofi Annan recommended an increase in the number of UN military observers in DRC to 500 and the deployment of 5,430 UN peacekeeping troops to monitor the cease-fire and ensure the protection of UN observers and all civilians.

In December, 62 people from Congolese NGOs, church groups, the press, and academia participated in a daylong evaluation of the activities of the IFES/DRC Resource Center for Democracy and Elections – the hub of IFES/DRC activities since July 1998. The evaluators concluded that the Center's activities in Kinshasa respond appropriately to the need for information about democracy and elections, and that the Center plays an important role in civil society's efforts to bring peace and democracy to the DRC. The evaluators offered recommendations for improvements, including: establishing satellite resource centers around Kinshasa and in other provinces, implementing a materials check-out system, improving audio-visual capacity, adding more Internet access sites, and acquiring additional civic education manuals. The use of the Resource Center continues to climb, averaging 100 visitors per day. During president Kabila's visit to the UN Security Council, about 140 visitors per day came to



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obtain up-to-the-minute information on the deliberations in New York on January 24 - 27.

In January, IFES/DRC was honored by two visits from USAID Deputy Administrator Vivian Derryck and her delegation that was on a tour of the region. IFES hosted a reception for Ms. Derryck with 57 local dignitaries and members of civil society on January 11. On the following day, Ms. Derryck participated in a debate with eleven civil society leaders on "The Success of the Inter-Congolese Dialogue as a Critical Element for Peace in DRC."

In close collaboration with its civil society partners, IFES/DRC finalized plans for the second phase of its "Promotion of a Culture of Peace and Democracy Program," a grassroots civic education effort engaging 750 democracy extension workers nationwide. The trainer's manual for the program has been revised and expanded to better capture and explain the numerous connections between democracy, conflict resolution, and sustainable economic and social development. The illustrations composing the "democracy picture box" used by the extension educators were improved.

Ghana

IFES' Project ECSELL (Enhancing Civil Society Effectiveness at the Local Level) began in December to award small grants to support: civic advocacy, strengthened civil society, and civic-government collaboration to address local issues. Project ECSELL works in 20 of Ghana's 110 districts. Seven small grants were awarded to civic groups in December. One of the grantees, Kyekyewere Farmers Association, will sponsor a community

meeting with their Member of Parliament regarding his use of public funds. The Afigya-Sekyere District Association of Civil Society Organizations received a small award to enable it to provide basic civic education to the new civic groups that are joining the Association. Also engaging in civic education, the Denkyira Development Association will conduct a program with the District Assembly in ten district communities to promote democracy at the grassroots.

Throughout January, IFES continued to review the grant applications from the civic groups across the 20 ECSELL districts. By February, IFES plans to award another 17 small grants.

Liberia

On December 5, 1999 Sam Bolay, the IFES/Liberia Project Coordinator, partnered with the Carter Center and three local Liberian NGOs to observe the local government and senatorial by-elections in Grand Bassa County. Following the elections, IFES presented the Chairman of the Liberian Elections Commission (ECOM) with a detailed observation report and recommendations for improving the administration of future elections.

In January, IFES-funded Star Radio was named Liberia's "Outstanding Radio Station of the Year" by the Association of Liberian Professional Organizations (ALPO). The award was presented to Star on January 21 following a nationwide poll conducted by ALPO assessing Liberian radio station on the following four criteria: adequacy of facilities and equipment; dedication to professional services; interest in growth and development



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of Liberia; and degree of public recognition. Star's past awards include honorable mention in the ECHO (European Community Humanitarian Office) Television and Radio Awards 1998; and the designation of a journalist and producer with Star as CNN's 1998 African Journalist of the Year (radio category).

Malawi

Legal proceedings against the majority United Democratic Front (UDF) and the Electoral Commission regarding the conduct of the 1999 election have proceeded slowly during the six months since the case was brought by the opposition alliance. The opposition claims that the Electoral Commission illegally declared President Bakili Muluzi the winner of the presidential elections, because he had not earned enough votes for the majority as prescribed by the constitution. The Supreme Court of Appeals has ordered the sides to agree on a date for a hearing. The opposition's legal team has confiscated large amounts of election material, which it plans to use as evidence at the hearing. The defendants have insisted that they have a right to re-examine the materials that they provided to the opposition legal team. Until this stalemate is solved, the two sides will not meet in court.

Following weeks of negotiations with IFES, the Law Commission of Malawi determined in late December 1999 that a proposed review of election legislation and harmonization would be more efficiently carried out by the Malawi Electoral Commission. This activity was to have been the final phase of the *Building A Democratic Infrastructure (BDI)* project. As a result of the Law Commission's decision, IFES has closed its Blantyre field

office and is preparing the final financial and narrative project reports. Funded by USAID, the IFES project supported the democratic transition in Malawi over a three-year period through the provision of: 44 person-months of technical assistance, over \$100,000 in equipment, \$150,000 in election materials, and nearly \$20,000 in meeting and conferences.

Morocco

IFES' Rule of Law program in Morocco, designed to improve the functioning of the commercial and administrative courts, nears implementation. The IFES program will provide assistance in developing a continuing judicial education program, through a pilot project for judges in the Rabat commercial and administrative courts. IFES will also help to strengthen judges' preparation in commercial and administrative law at INEJ, the national judicial training institute.

In January, IFES submitted to USAID a trip report on its October/November planning mission to Morocco, as well as a work plan outlining activities for the coming year. During the week of February 7, the Secretary General of the Ministry of Justice, Mr. Ahmed Ghazali, will visit IFES to discuss the work plan. IFES hopes to conduct its initial program activity, seminars for judges and MOJ officials on the role and powers of the judge in the common law and civil law traditions, in March.



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Nigeria

IFES was greatly saddened to learn of the death of the Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) of Nigeria, Justice E.O.I. Akpata, in early January. As Chairman of the INEC, Justice Akpata was responsible for the conduct of the 1998-1999 elections in Nigeria, which resulted in the transition from military rule to an elected civilian government in May 1999. One important element of Justice Akpata's legacy, of which there are many, is his leadership during this critical time in Nigeria's history. He will be remembered for his vital role in bringing democracy to his country.

In January 2000, IFES returned to Nigeria to continue its USAID-funded technical assistance to the INEC. IFES' activities in Nigeria will be directed by Joe Baxter, IFES Senior Advisor on Election Administration. Mr. Baxter will be based in Abuja, the site of INEC headquarters. In the short-term, IFES' technical assistance to the INEC will consist of two projects: 1) supporting the development of the INEC's multi-year strategic plan and budget, and 2) supporting the final design of the voter registration plan. IFES will work with the INEC in convening a strategic planning retreat in March 2000. The retreat will lead to the development of detailed operational plans to lay the foundation for the next general elections in Nigeria in 2002. Additionally, IFES will support the INEC's convening of public forums on the voter registration process to enhance the transparency of the design of the electoral process.

South Africa

Preparations for the final activity proposed under the 1998 Election Institution Support project are underway. Senior Program Officer Laurie Cooper travels to South Africa in early February to meet with the Electoral Commission and discuss the timing and scope of an activity to develop a civic education curriculum. IFES estimates that the USAID-funded project will come to a close in late 2000.

Uganda

Bob Brandstetter, Laurie Cooper and Grace Githu completed their preliminary assessment and project design and start-up on December 22. Bob Brandstetter, the chief of party for the project, returned to Kampala on January 7, 2000. Preparations for the 2000 referendum in Uganda are moving at a slow pace, despite the fact that less than five months remain before the anticipated July referendum. Although the legislation governing the referendum was passed in August, the legislation regarding political parties (*Other Political Systems Act, No. 3, 2000*) was not approved until January 25. As a result, the degree to which all of the actors in the referendum could participate is only now being established. The Electoral Commission has yet to determine the degree to which it can regulate party activities in the run-up to the referendum.

The approval of the referendum legislation late last year opened the season for political "canvassing." However, without accompanying legislation, the Electoral Commission was unable to regulate campaign activities, providing supporters of the "NRM perspective" on the referendum with unlimited opportunities to advance their cause. Advocates of the NRM perspective

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took the position that opposition “multipartyists” were committing illegal acts by encouraging people not to register for, or vote in, the upcoming referendum. To silence this debate, Justice and Constitutional Affairs Minister Joash Mayanja-Nkangi stated in late January that this activity was not in fact illegal, and that no one engaged in this type of campaigning would be subject to arrest.

IFES launched its 2000 project activities with the provision of a \$35,000 subgrant to the Uganda Joint Christian Council (UJCC). The UJCC is the lead civil society organization of a group of five that will be monitoring the referendum campaign and election day activities. The organizations will work with IFES to produce a monthly report of their monitoring activities and conclusions regarding the process. The introductory report will be produced during the second week of February.

Yemen

The first phase of IFES training for the Supreme Elections Committee (SEC) senior staff commenced in mid-December, and is due to continue through March. This phase aims to enhance the staff's capabilities in general election organization and management skills. The training addresses a range of topics, including the preparation of election legislation, election budgeting and monitoring, and organization of election calendars. Approximately thirty staff members are taking part. IFES is also providing information technology (IT) training through a local computer training institute. So far, training has been by all accounts highly successful, with almost 100 percent attendance.

IFES is also helping the SEC begin to prepare for local government elections, which may take place concurrent with the 2001 April parliamentary elections. Nine years after the first draft local government law was prepared, in January the Parliament agreed on and passed a Local Government Administration Law (*it now awaits ratification by President Saleh*). It establishes around three hundred eighty six new local government areas, in addition to the existing twenty governorates. Governors and directors of local councils will be appointed, and council members will be elected.

In January, IFES met with the Minister of Local Government, Mr. Sadiq Amin Abu Ras, to clarify IFES' understanding of the law. Earlier, Project Manager Dennis Cozens gave a presentation to an audience of international donor representatives entitled "Law Concerning Local Government Administration: Its Implications for the SEC." He explored the challenges that the SEC would face in organizing local government elections, based on the draft law currently before Parliament, outlining areas where donor support to the SEC could strengthen the election process. In March, IFES plans to conduct a seminar for the SEC commissioners and senior staff on the implications of the new law for election preparations.

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